

## Paleo Solution - 398

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Robb: Hey, folks, six listeners can't be wrong. Another edition of the Paleo Solution podcast. Today was a ton of fun. I got to speak with Derrick Johnson who is a master Olympic weightlifting coach. He is a level five coach, which means he is eligible to take folks to the Olympic games, really fascinating story. He got involved with Olympic weightlifting via an inner city youth program a number of years ago and has gone on to quite a remarkable amount of success.

That's a whole interesting fantastic story in and of itself, but Derrick had largely retired due to a string of injuries, knee, back, shoulder injuries, systemic inflammation. And then a couple of years ago, somebody mentioned a low carb ketogenic diet to him and it took a little bit of thumbscrews and arm twisting to get him to give this thing a shot. But after Derrick really got dialed into his ketogenic diet experience, he ended up dropping a weight class and got back in and started competing again and has broken multiple American records as a consequence to his comeback. So, really fascinating story.

He has also founded a 501(3)(c) program called The Kings of Weightlifting. This is a free gym for inner city youth in south central Los Angeles. So, a really fascinating guy, super good dude. Give this one a listen. I think you'll enjoy it.

Hey, Derrick, how are you doing?

Derrick: I'm doing great. Doing great. Body is feeling good.

Robb: Awesome. You can't beat that. I dug into your background a little bit as part of the intro but give folks a little bit more of your background, how you got into just strength and conditioning in general. Did you have any really formative inspirations? I had a cousin that was really into weightlifting. That was about four years, five years older than I am. Anything that she did I wanted to do and that has pretty much set up the vector for the rest of my life. Did you have any inspirations like that getting going?

Derrick: Growing up I had this guy that lived next door. He was a friend of my older sisters. He would always tell me about this after school gym that he used to go to. This was when I was 11 years old. I probably begged him for about six months, because he was about six feet tall, 210 pounds, six pack, big pec muscles, just completely muscular, then here I am, this 11-year old slim kid.

This guy will not take me to the gym that he says he has all these medals and trophies at. Somehow, one day, I'm coming from school, he says, "Hey, let's go to the gym." So, we go to this gym. It's in the inner city of Saint Louis. It's in downtown Saint Louis, completely rundown. If you've ever watched those Rocky movies where Apollo Creed used to work at it, very dim lit, water dripping from the ceilings. It was this old candy factory. Although the buildings were abandoned, boarded up next to it.

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They had a basketball hoop in there and then they had these weights in there. And so I was like, "I'm the ultimate competitor. Let's go. I can beat everybody in here even though they might have been in here years and months before me." I got my first work at in a few days before I turned 12 years old. And so from that point I'd been competing for 21 years in the sport of Olympic weightlifting.

Robb: That's awesome. Was it initially Olympic weightlifting that you got into? I know a lot of folks will start with some bodybuilding or some powerlifting and then transition into Olympic weightlifting.

Derrick: Right. That's probably the norm for most people. Mine was literally -- Of course, I didn't know what Olympic weightlifting was. I didn't know what a snatch was. My first day of lifting a bar was the Olympic movements.

Robb: Interesting. Okay. That's pretty rare in the US. Like you go to Europe and....

Derrick: No, no, it's super rare. What are the chances of running into an inner city weightlifting program that's free for kids? Because we would never have been able to afford it.

Robb: Right. So, you've been in this long enough. You probably remembered John Eskeem up in Sequim, Washington. Do you remember that guy? He died back in 2003 from a brain tumor but he had run a program in Northwestern Washington for youth athletics for years a bunch of people that went on to set a decent amount of notoriety. Jesse Marunde and some other folks, they got their start with him. It was this weird deal because they were expecting to go in and start doing this bodybuilding deal and they're like, "Okay, so, I'm supposed to throw this bar over my head?" It was interesting but that's awesome. Did you do any other peripheral sport activities that you could -- yeah?

Derrick: I did everything with sport. Before that, I would spend six to eight hours a day playing basketball especially if it was the summertime. I was absolutely hard core which I still am as far as training. I would run miles. Because this guy, my sister's older friend, he would never take me to the gym. It was upon myself to start

doing push-ups. I was doing sit-ups every night. I was running around the track across the street from home, anything I could do to get stronger.

It was funny when I started, I guess, I told my father that when I started doing weightlifting and I guess he thought I was doing bodybuilding. He would give me subscription to all these bodybuilding magazines. And now, because these guys were, of course, muscular, I would always do bodybuilding with my Olympic lifting.

Robb: Right.

Derrick: My physique is more of -- People would probably ask me, am I MMA fighter or a bodybuilder or something?

Robb: Which is interesting because, I mean, there was a time when the Olympic lifts some bodybuilding, they would compete in the lifts one day and then do a bodybuilding competition the next day. It was an overall, kind of how did you place in one and how did you place in the other one? It's a little bit unfortunate that nobody's put that back together.

Derrick: I would have loved to put, if that existed... I've researched the history and I would have loved, it would have been set up for me perfectly right now.

Robb: Yeah. We'd just make it a little bit more interesting too, maybe even stick in just a little bit of strong man in it or something like that, maybe a three-day gig where you do a lifting meet day one, maybe the strong man day two, and then wrap it up with the bodybuilding show on day three. That would be interesting. I wonder if anybody is ever going to dig into that and try to do that at some point. Yeah, yeah.

Derrick, where did nutrition enter your training? I mean, usually, this is something that's left somewhat to chance or maybe you have a mentor that's got a particular nutritional philosophy. Where did that start influencing your training, your noticing that the way that you ate would influence your results?

Derrick: This was absolutely something that I'd never even thought about. I had been to the Olympic Training Center a bunch of times. I've competed internationally a bunch of times and this style of eating, more higher fat lower carbs, was never a conversation. Nutrition really wasn't a conversation, anyway, whatever type of nutrition plan, especially in weightlifting. It's more of the hardcore eat as much carbs as you can to get bigger and if you get bigger you get stronger.

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Well, nobody talks about the inflammation. I've competed for 15 years. I was 27. And then when I was 27 years old I moved to Los Angeles. I'd been staying here in Los Angeles for a little under six years now. When I got here, everybody has nutrition advice. Everybody has a dietitian. Everybody knows about food here, or at least they think so.

And then so I'm sifting through different things and at this point I've had two knee surgeries, I've had multiple cortisone injections into each knee, into all in my back, cortisone injections. I used to take 800 milligrams of Ibuprofen before each workout. Sometimes I would do Vicodin after the workout, before if the pain was that tough. I had muscle relaxants also.

You take your insurance card, you go to your doctor, this is what they give you. They say, "Okay, well, continue and if there's any other thing, come back." Once the prescription medicines don't work, it's surgery time. Then, of course, I had my first -- I'm 33 years old now and I had my first knee surgery at, I believe, what is it, 19 years old. I was scared. It was like, "This might be the end of my career. Weightlifting, I had to squat. I had to be explosive. This might be it here."

When I moved to Los Angeles, I had already done all those things. I competed for 15 years and was like, well, this is probably it. I just want to come out here and coach and better my craft because at that point I became a senior international level five coach. That means, as a coach, I'm eligible to coach at the Olympics.

Robb: Derrick, that's about a 20-year developmental process going from that rookie athlete to hitting this level five coaching status. What was the sig crystal that put the lower carb ketogenic way of eating on your radar? Let's all throw that out there, but it's funny, one of the first times that I ever heard about a low carb way of eating I want to say it was probably back in the late '80s, early '90s.

It was a muscle and fitness magazine but they were talking about some Bulgarian Olympic lifters and that these guys were eating some sort of high protein high fat low carb diet and everybody was in a twitter about it because they're like, "Oh, that's got to be horrible." Maybe those guys were onto something even if they were doing it at a periodized fashion. Who was it or what was it that got it on your radar?

Derrick: I was in the gym in Santa Monica, California and the gym there, they would have patients, some with cancer, some with health issues, and they would keep talking about keto, ketogenic, and I would just hear it. They never directly had a conversation with me but that's what they were doing for their patients and Peter Rules **[Phonetic]** was the guy that ran that particular gym, the AFP Center, it was called. He was out of New Zealand. He just had a different thought than

the American thought. He didn't think like the typical dietician or nutritionist, which is what I loved.

As I would be around them with their different patients -- Because once he starts talking about, well, we've been seeing great benefits with people that have cancer and all these other health issues that they're reversing these issues and limiting these issues, now, I remember one day I went home and I looked up keto and a Google search was just -- it would just scare me like, "Stay away from ketosis. Ketogenic is bad. Keto, no."

I came back the next day and I had more questions for Peter. I said, "So, this diet is like a keto diet?" At that point I wanted him to explain himself. He just said, "Yeah." And then I was like -- It shocked me. It shocked me so much because I want him to say or I was going to be like, "Hey, I read all this stuff. Keto is bad." And he would just like, "No. Yes, it's keto. Nothing is wrong with it." At that point, I kept looking even more, like, okay, I got to--

Because I'm a political science major. I got to go even deeper. I got to look a little deeper here. So, I was doing more research and asking them more and more questions and so about two months later I started, I made a lifestyle change. At that point, because of the 15 years, the multiple knee surgeries, cortisone injections, I was almost, I was pretty much done with competing.

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At this point, I switched to this lifestyle change here. I started going to bed at 10:00 p.m. because we had to have correct sleep patterns, is what I was figuring out. I had to get the GI tract leveled out, level my blood sugars. So, just getting ready mentally for this lifestyle change. Going into those 2013 national championships, I went six months no sugar, no grains, no alcohol, no dairy. I probably went the first few months with no caffeine. I really wanted everything to level off. I wanted everything -- I went to a more of anti-inflammatory elimination style diet, is what they taught around there.

Robb: I got to ask. Was that the best six months of your life or the worst?

Derrick: It was the best six months. I remember, I think about a week later, because I probably moved to LA and I was probably 160 something. I think two weeks later I might have been 145. No, I'm sorry, two weeks after I did the lifestyle change, I call it, or the dietary change, I was 145.

Now, I was going to compete at a different weight class because I made the decision that, hey, I'm competing again. Six months with essentially red meat, avocados -- I would introduce nuts back in there but I think I went a month or

two at the beginning without even nuts being in there. Green vegetables, spinach, kale. I think that was pretty much it right there.

But I remember talking to my mother a couple of weeks after I started and I was telling her, "I'm in here training." I probably haven't felt this good since I was 15 years old, and I was saying it at that time that I was 27 years old. I was like, I hope this is not in my head, but my actual joint and my knee feels pretty good. At then at that point, as I continued going on, I'm learning more and more about inflammation, that I can control inflammation through the gut, through what I put into my body.

Where they'd be athletic injuries, pain, you have to have inflammation. So, inflammation gets stored around the joints. Athletes run into injuries around the joints. So I can bring that inflammation down just by how I'm eating. Of course, sleeping at a good time. I would take all the electronics out of my room. I didn't want anything affecting my sleep patterns. I was pretty hardcore there.

I would go on to win the 2013 national championships. I won the 2014 national championships, 2015 national championships. I will make the international world teams in 2014, the Pan American championships in 2014, American records. I was breaking American records at 29 years old.

Robb: Which is not a spring chicken in Olympic weightlifting.

Derrick: You know the age of the people that are breaking records now? 18, 17, 19, early 20s. A few months ago at the American Open, a month before I turned 33 years old, I broke the American record in the snatch and in the total. These are not just the current American records but they're all time American records.

Robb: Wow.

Derrick: You can compare me and my weight against guys in the, not just a guy that's 33 years old but you can compare me against the guys in the 90s, if you want, the guys in the early 2000s, the guys in the '80s, '70s, and my total is bigger in the United States.

Robb: Derrick, was there a lag time in your performance? Usually, the first month when folks go low carb or keto, they can add some pretty rough workouts. Usually we see a little bit more like if they're doing some more like metabolic type activity but we'll see potentially some strength decreases, maybe some decrease performance and then it ramps up after that. That first month, did you have any type of a dip like that or was it pretty smooth sailing?

Derrick: No, that was my -- I did have that dip in the first month but at that point I already -- They already let me know what to expect. I never had high expectations. So, I already knew, okay, I dropped the body weight class. I'm in a lighter weight class now in weightlifting. I know that I'm not going to be hitting those numbers right now so I build the strength back up.

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But what I was thinking was why I decided to compete again, I say, you know what, if I drop a weight class and I'm able to get the inflammation out of my joints so I can train harder now I can probably lift what I lifted in the higher weight class. Guess what? I've been right there the whole time. I had a lighter weight class lifting what I did in a higher weight class.

Robb: Which is the holy grail for a weight class sport. Whether it's wrestling or Olympic lifting or whatever, you'd like to be as light as you possibly could and then be as strong as possible.

Derrick: Right. That's the absolute advantage in cutting weight. Ever since 2013, every time you hear me speak, I'm speaking about nutrition first.

Robb: That's awesome.

Derrick: I just came back from the Pan-American championships, about a month ago. It was in the Dominican Republic. And now our federation is bringing along a nutritionist to help with the athletes. But the nutritionist doesn't do any keto, high fat, and gives people rice, cooks rice with everything. It was just a lot of carbs. So, I was like, I like where they're going but in this particular case I can't do anything with this particular person.

Robb: Right. It's interesting. I've had the opportunity to work with a few Olympic weightlifters, few powerlifters and it's been a hard sell for folks particularly in the Olympic weightlifting scene, interestingly, to get them to hang in there long enough to go through this process because they'll lose some weight, and particularly weight through the midsection, and I mean, Louie Simmons, the Westside Barbell guru, he talks about, if he's got a thicker waist then you tend to have this bigger base of support and it will help your squat.

I do think that over the course of time folks can, to your point, rebuild up to where they were at a higher weight class. But, man, that's a lot of psychological -- People almost need a therapist to be able to get them through that transition.

Derrick: We have a horrible relationship with food. So, the food that's spiking your blood sugar all throughout day, wearing out your pancreas, that's that we want to eat it every day?

Robb: Right. And contributing to that over the top inflammation that's causing the problems with joints and slow recovery. That was another question I wanted to ask you. Your recovery, once you went keto -- Again, maybe people don't fully appreciate it if they hear someone saying they're 29 or 33. For some sports, that's the prime, the peak. But in Olympic weightlifting, that's oftentimes five almost ten years past prime when folks are setting records and then it's just trying to hang on after that. What was your recovery like once you shifted around to a lower carb way of eating?

Derrick: Well, just like training because when I switched I was doing it without pre-workouts because it was always about balancing the hormones. So, now, even without pre-workouts, my focus is better. I'm sleeping better. That's the number one thing I'm monitoring my recovery. I'm able to do the same workload that I was doing 18 years prior.

Robb: Interesting. Wow.

Derrick: We'll just explain it. Going back to the Pan-American championships a month ago, do you know just some of the men on the team? I was in the 62 weight class. The next class was a 17-year old. The next class was an 18-year old. I just found it to be completely funny on the United States team. It's a 17-year old phenom, 18-year old phenom. Oh, yeah, 33-year old, yeah, this guy.

Robb: Right.

Derrick: But going back to Louie, it's like when you have that big waistline, what about the visceral fat?

Robb: Right. And all the inflammation.

Derrick: What about the fat around those organs? That's the most dangerous fat that there is. That's what ages the organs. That is the worst fat that you can have and I know it's all about -- So, powerlifting, Olympic weightlifting, it comes from such a hardcore -- like the coaches are older, 50, 60-year old coaches. So, they're not going to have a keto conversation. They're going to have eat as many carbs as you can. You're sore? Eat more carbs. You're tired? Eat more carbs.

Robb: Have more coffee and Ibuprofen, yeah.

Derrick: Yeah. And that's why I always have to bring up my surgery, the cortisone injections, the hardcore painkillers because you're going to need that.

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If you're creating all this inflammation, you're going to need that. And people say, "Okay, well, what do you eat before you train?" "Oh, I have zero spikes in my blood sugar. It really is all high fat."

Robb: Derrick, give us maybe a sample day of what you're consuming and do you have any sense of total calories you're consuming, total amount of proteins, carb, fat that you do end up getting in? Do you have any sense around that?

Derrick: At the beginning, the first year and a half, I would go home and track everything on my computer, the proteins, the calories. Now, I just go off fueling the body and the field. I don't track anything anymore. I think I am around 200 grams of fat or something a day, at least I try to get to that point. Sample day could be half a pound of grass fed ground beef, avocado, maybe I'll throw coconut oil in my tea. Before that I have apple cider vinegar to start the detoxification process then I'll have a turmeric tea. Throughout the day -- I'll go train here in a couple of hours and then after my workout I'll just have maybe macadamia nuts. Those things are great. To me, that's a big of chips. That's candy. That is the greatest thing ever.

Robb: It's crazy once you get keto-adapted that the macadamia nut would taste really, really sweet but it doesn't at some point.

Derrick: A lot of people taste it and they say, "Oh, this just doesn't taste--" No. It's the most delicious thing ever.

Robb: Right, right.

Derrick: I try to make sure they're roasted. It helps break down even faster. If you are eating nuts, I would say, get them sprouted or soaked or something like that just to be able to digest or just break them down a little better.

Robb: Right. I mean, not a crazy over the top amount of calories, it's sounding like.

Derrick: I realize that I used to say, okay, I got to go base. If I was eating regular carbs I would need 3,000. With fat, I've seen with myself, you just don't need that same amount of calories. If I had 3,000 calories of the way I eat, I would be taking three naps a day. It would need that much.

Robb: I don't know if you follow the Ketogains guys at all but this is something that we've talked about a little bit more back channel and we haven't talked about it out in the open a whole lot, but we've noticed that -- and this is one of the interesting things. Keto is so popular for fat loss and it's super effective but there's this sense with folks that they can eat as much as they want. In some cases, it seems like you've got a little more latitude than when folks were eating carbs.

But we've noticed over the course of time, it seems like people need fewer calories instead of more. Years and years ago, Coach Greg Glassman, the guy that founded CrossFit, he and I were talking about this modified version of the Zone, which was a very high fat. The total carb content for a hard training athlete was maybe 100 grams of carbs a day. It wasn't that far off of what you would see with a ketogeic diet particularly in a very active individual.

His back of the envelope numbers was that these folks, once they became fat-adapted, they needed about 20% fewer calories than what they did otherwise. That was just really interesting. What's fascinating is you're getting really good performance out of that but then when we look at some of the longevity research, that caloric restriction is really important in health and longevity and it seems like people, if we're right about this, if we're not all suffering a mass hallucination, which is possible, but it seems like people are able to motor along on fewer calories. They have great performance. They have better recovery. It's like, okay, what's the downside on this? I mean, so long as you got the fueling that works for you.

Derrick: Well, because at the end of the day, it's all about fueling yourself. And people, like even -- I've seen people that go higher fat. They're constantly eating. They're eating a lot. Like me, it takes me forever to eat literally. I try to chew 40 to 50 times. I want everything to be broken down before it goes into my stomach. Even something like that. My breakfast may take me 30 to 40 minutes to eat and I'm not eating much. Now, the slower I'm eating the fuller I get.

Robb: Right. Shocker. We actually give a chance for those satiety signals to kick in. That's awesome.

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Derrick: Yeah. I was even seeing people -- So, yeah, if you're doing high fat and you're still going, aiming for whatever you were aiming for when you were doing carbs, you're probably going to retain some of that weight that you were trying to lose because you just don't need that much.

Robb: Man, it's a hard thing to sell by people. They feel like they're scared that they're going to be hungry and they're going to lose muscle mass and lose performance but if you can just get people to relax for that first month or two and tinker with all this, it's pretty cool.

Derrick: They can't just think of the thought of going out those that rice, especially for weightlifters, that rice, that wheat. I say, well, that's one of the higher glycemic foods that you can possibly put down your throat.

Robb: Right. Go ahead.

Derrick: I was going to say I even look at the glycemic load on things. At first, I used to eat cashews. I was like, whoa, 22 on the glycemic index. So then, of course, that's when I completely switched to -- I was already doing almonds but now I'm officially just macadamia, mostly macadamia nuts.

Robb: You're basically cleaning out your Costco once a week with a little flood of macadamias. Nice, nice.

Derrick: Expensive but it has to be done at this point.

Robb: Yeah. Derrick, how has the rest of your family embraced it? Like you go home for a family gathering, is there any drama with that or folks are pretty open to it?

Derrick: They're probably like, "Oh, yeah, he's just doing that to get better." But I'm just doing it, I guess, even if I wasn't competing because once you understand relationship between the person and food and the higher inflammatory foods you can't go back to eating them once you stopped. They've taken out some things so every time we'd talk I'll bring up, "Hey, what about this? What about that? Are you still eating those? How is your body feeling?" "Oh, I lost a few pounds here." "Okay, what about those oils you're cooking with? Could you use coconut oil or olive oil in there?"

Robb: It sounds like you're getting some better buy in that I had with my family.

Derrick: I don't know all of the changes. I have to see what they do on a daily basis. They're definitely open to it because all of them know that I was starting with prescription pills when I was 17 years old to get through the wrestling and weightlifting practices, I'm sorry, started when I hyperextended my knee in basketball my junior year.

Robb: Okay. Derrick, what does the standard training week look like for you right now? I know that that would vary based if you're off season or getting ready for competition prep, but what's your baseline? How many days a week are you

getting in the gym? How do you breakup the main lifts versus the accessory lifts? What does all that look like?

Derrick: Getting ready for that competition a month ago, at certain points, I was doing weights five days a week then I'll have a stability day, a mobility day on Saturday, so six days. Right now, I'm doing three days weights because I don't compete until September. Right now, I'm doing three days of weights, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and then Saturday I'll go in there and I'll do core activation, glute activation, shoulder and thoracic mobility and so I'm really big into protecting the joints. I always have a day of that. So, that's my recovery right there when I talk about core, not sit-ups, not leg raises. I completely eliminated those when I started the whole lifestyle change too.

Robb: Interesting. So, more like hallow rocks and stuff like that? What are you doing for training?

Derrick: They're more like bird dog, side plank, dead bugs, animal movements, baby movements. So, nothing that isolates muscle groups. I want to work the entire, the core, shoulder joint to the hip joint. And then, of course, a part of my recovery is the way I eat. It's funny. I was having a conversation with USA weightlifting last week and they were helping out, they want to help out athletes with recovery and I was saying, actually, the food I buy is my number one recovery method and then everything else is accessory on top of that. Of course, I do dead lifts and pulls and squats and they're added into my regular weight days, my Olympic weightlifting days.

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It's the same thing as opposed to just having a straight up powerlifting day or bodybuilding movements, pull-ups and then pull-ups the other day. So, they're in there already. So, I don't have necessarily an accessory day.

Robb: Got you. You just mix them into the whole program. I think that that's a great takeaway particularly I love so much of what CrossFit has brought to the world but folks have not really internalized this idea of an on season and off season and that even someone like you who is competing at literally the highest levels of the sport, every week is not competition week. It's not competition prep week.

There's time where training may drop down to two to three days a week and it's pretty modest. Maybe there's a little more volume, little less intensity, a little bit more bodybuilding type stuff. And then there's some ramp up and focus and so there is some need for a little bit of periodization and some off time. But, man, it's hard to sell people on that. It's hard to sell them that, yeah, you got to work

hard. But then however hard you worked in the gym, you've got to have equal type of recovery and down time. It's very hard to sell folks on that.

Derrick: Yeah. Because at the beginning, you feel like you're so far behind. So, they're trying to catch up to the other people and get to that level. And that's the thing about training. It's all, "Well, you got to outwork your opponent." No, no. I got to outsmart my opponent. Maybe I don't need to do workout seven days a week or six days a week. Maybe now because I'm even back down to three right now, maybe I'll ramp, put another weightlifting day in there but it's three right now.

Of course, it's been five, it's been six, it's been two days. Yeah, it's just all about knowing how much time you need to get into shape. You're just conditioning yourself nine months out from that competition. Well, how are you going to get that strength because you say you were in the strength phase right now? But you're doing so much conditioning that you can't get that strength.

Robb: Yeah. It's a hard sell for folks. That was part of why I somewhat stepped out of working with athletes, specifically I did a lot of work with MMA folks for a period of time, but my main role as a coach was acting as a speed bump. I was just trying to slow them down from killing themselves. And then I would do this work with folks who were sick, had type II diabetes, autoimmune disease.

I really felt like what I did moved the needle for those people. It could literally save their life. Whereas this stud athlete, whether it's a male or a female, they were going to be a stud athlete no matter what I did. Whether or not they won or lost oftentimes just came down to did I slow them down enough so that they didn't kill themselves in the competition prep? I was like I don't know that I really enjoyed that as much as helping folks that actually have some serious health issues.

You are doing a lot of coaching now. How do you manage that? It's an interesting thing when you've got somebody full of enough piss and vinegar to compete it's hard to talk them into, "Hey, you need some downtime, you need to cycle this." How do you manage all that?

Derrick: Hopefully, we have that respect like I've normally gotten. So, usually, whatever I put on the board, whatever I say is the workout, they usually do it. Now, it's much easier because I just opened this free after school weightlifting program in South Central Los Angeles. I opened in January 8. It's kids from seven to 17 years old. Of course, they're absolutely doing whatever I put on the board.

That program has been open a few months. It's a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Yes, they're doing exactly what I'm saying. I see people, when I train at other gyms, they say this is hurting and that is hurting and then you look at the workout

they're doing, you say, "Wow, I see why he is hurting." Because the technique is not there especially at the beginning where you see that with athletes that haven't done the Olympics lift that long.

It takes a decade for you to really get the technique of how you wanted to look. So, if you've been doing it two or three years and now you're doing the world's greatest workout, the world's greatest workout training plan that you think you have, without the technique, the body is going to have to compensate.

**[0:40:04]**

I think once the person hits that first injury, now they'll listen to you more. That's usually what it comes down to. I'm not the one -- I'm not going to stop anybody from doing anything. I'll make sure I get my workout in and if you have any questions you can ask me but it usually takes that first injury and then the person will ask you more questions now. Because now they had to sit out a month, two months, six months, or they've had to reduce their training so much that they effectively been in the gym doing nothing. That's usually the point where now you can really have that conversation and really tell them everything you think they should know.

Robb: Right. That's awesome. It sounds like maybe in some ways a lot of other countries Olympic weightlifting is a little bit more just baked into the culture and kids get screened and selected in earlier age. To your point, it takes a long time to really get the proficiency and the technique, which is funny. It's only two lifts, clean and jerk and snatch, but there's a lot that goes into that. Are you seeing that process a little bit more? Were more kids in the United States getting some opportunities to explore this sport earlier and we might get a little more competitive over the course of time?

Derrick: Yeah, I will probably say more kids are getting into the sport. But just like with other sports, I believe kids are specializing too much. They're playing one sport year round and specializing. Doctors have come out constantly, for the people listening, doctors have come out constantly saying kids shouldn't specialize. They should play a multitude of sports so that they don't run into the overuse injuries and their bodies are just not developed to be doing that one movement over and over.

It doesn't matter if it's football. Even if you're a football player, you should do different things so your body is used to different movements. Just like gymnasts, even gymnasts, they specialize. They may be the definition of specialization. By the age of 15, 16, that body is going downhill almost at that point.

Robb: Right. Yeah. It's a very, very young sport due to the volume and the intensity that folks need in that.

Derrick: Gymnastics at about 15, 16 years old, I mean, I've seen so many have surgeries, ankle, foot, knee, shoulder, and that's because of the overuse as well as the constant repetitions. My hope is that more kids lifting weights now that would be more competitive but if they're doing it year round like I see a lot of them are then I think our injuries in the sport are going to go through the roof.

Robb: Be problematic. Under ideal story then they would have a periodized program, they would have maybe some youth meets that they prepare for but then things would shift around and maybe they would even do a little bit more bodybuilding or power lifting type stuff and we would try to get them to do some basketball, football or wrestling, just some other sports that they're still doing the strength and conditioning to help them be better at in the sport but just getting a much wider movement exposure.

Derrick: Yeah, that will be how I would do it. And once again, with the Olympic lifts, we pretty much do the powerlifting lifts. But really, it's like people are afraid to put muscle on so they stay away from the bodybuilding lifts. You rarely see people do, weightlifters do bench press, curls, tricep work, pull-ups. I'm a huge fan of those lifts.

But even what they would do in China, let's say you came there as a weightlifter at six, seven years old, they're going to start developing your entire body starting with the ankles, making sure you have ankle dorsiflexion, hip mobility, thoracic and shoulder mobility, wrist mobility. It seems like in the United States everybody is skipping those steps.

Even if it's a CrossFitter or a football player, you're lifting heavy even though you don't have the ankle mobility or, let's say, you don't have the hip mobility, well, now you have to compensate somewhere, maybe your low back, maybe your hips, maybe your knee, and so mine is really about the development there.

Robb: That's awesome. It's super exciting too.

**[0:44:59]**

We have a mutual acquaintance, Chris Clark, that puts us in contact and it's just super cool what you are doing here. Let the folks know where they can track you down on the interwebs and also a little bit more information about this 501(3)(c) that you're running.

Derrick: So, on Instagram, my handle is @4derrick, also @4derrick on Twitter, 4derrick on Facebook. As I spoke about the 501(c)(3), the gym I started at 21 years ago was at the school inner city weightlifting program. It was a free program that's pretty much all of us were lower income, mostly black kids in this particular area. But they would pay our way to go to trips, competitions. And from that I started at the gym in 1997. The gym opened in 1998. But I will become the first 17 and under youth national champion. I would become the first 20 and under junior national champion. I would become the first senior national champion, international team member, a person to train at the Olympic training center.

And so I've been living in LA almost six years and my goal was to always open a program like that. Maybe it took me about six months of just really getting on the ground and learning about the area of South Central Los Angeles and January 8, two days after my birthday, I officially opened the doors and so now we have some of the best equipment in the gym. We have weightlifting shoes for all the kids. I'm going to pay for the membership fees, the entry fees, flights to the competitions, food.

Whatever costs are associated with that, The Kings of Weightlifting will take care of those calls. As soon as I get off here, I'm heading down there and getting ready for the summer crowd to train. Of course, I'll get my work at in first. It's completely free. There's nothing we ask of the kids besides having good grades and respecting everybody in the gym.

Robb: That's awesome. Derrick, do you have website for that?

Derrick: The website is [kingsofweightlifting.com](http://kingsofweightlifting.com).

Robb: Awesome.

Derrick: And we're also Kings of Weightlifting on Instagram and The Kings of Weightlifting on Facebook. Facebook and Instagram is The Kings of Weightlifting.

Robb: Okay. I'll make sure we get all of that in the show notes. Derrick, super stoked to at least meet you via the podcast and I'm really happy that Chris put us in contact. I'd been an advocate of this lower carb Paleo keto eating for almost 20 years now. I try not to be as zealot about it but it's also when those things where it's like, yeah, it really works well for a lot of people. It's great meeting someone like you and seeing this incredible success you've had.

Derrick: Yeah. And when Chris, like I said, Robb, Robb Wolf's podcast. I said, "What? Set that up, please. Please, definitely set that up." I mean, I couldn't even imagine. You've been on it for 20 years and I know how passionate I am about having

conversations with people like now. It's like, "No, you have this autoimmune disorder. You got to do this. This is going to help it. We don't want to--"

We're talking to some of my friends like, "Oh, you want to have that rheumatoid arthritis and have to rely on taking those shots and all the other medication they give you. It is never going to end with this stuff." And I'm like, "We got to start healing that pancreas. We got to start healing and sealing that gut so you could eventually get off of those prescription pills and have that freedom."

Robb: Right. And the cool thing is really what you're asking folks to do is give it a shot for 30, maybe 60 days, and then just ask, do you look, feel and perform better? And if not, then we'll try something else. By and large, people tend to get better on this stuff. If we can just rope them into giving it, kicking the tires on it that first time, it usually sells itself from there. That's awesome.

Derrick: But the toughest thing is getting through the propaganda. So, they'd see all the scientific, I'm sorry, this unscientific research done out here, there's complete propaganda that's being thrown at them every single day. So, that's probably the toughest part because they're going to go research it and they're going to find everything that's opposite. They're going to find something that says red meat, terrible, saturated fats, terrible. It just doesn't stop. These guys are working in overdrive to make sure these industries are unaffected by the health conscious people.

Robb: Well, we've got our work cut out for us, that's for sure. We've done a lot of job security. Nobody is going to fix all these problems for us. Well, Derrick, I really hope we get to meet in real life and maybe we can get a workout in and that would be awesome.

Derrick: Awesome.

Robb: All right, Derrick. Take care and thank you for taking the time to come on and I'll make sure that we get all the contact info and the information about The Kings of Weightlifting Program in the show notes and looking forward to meeting you in real life.

Derrick: That's great. Thanks for having me on.

Robb: Awesome, Derrick. Take care.

**[0:50:41] End of Audio**