

Paleo Solution – Episode 129

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Robb Wolf: Hey folks. Robb Wolf here, the ever large and in charge Gregg Everett and then we have pure royalty today, strength coach, Mike Robertson. How are you doing man?

Mike Robertson: I'm doing awesome. Thanks for having me, guys.

Robb Wolf: Huge honor having you on. You've been on all the big stuff and so I hope that this isn't like a Henry Winkler kind of gig **[Laughing]** of going on the skids. We're happy to have you hear, man.

Mike Robertson: Whatever, man. Hey everybody tells me you guys are the podcast to be on. So I feel like I'm in the presence of royalty.

Gregg Everett: We're just way more birthday party than physics class. **[Laughing]**

Robb Wolf: I'm of a lack of talent in the vertical so, yeah.

Mike Robertson: Ah, yes. Cool.

Robb Wolf: Well, Mike, you know you had me on your podcast. It's been a month or two now, right?

Mike Robertson: Yup.

Robb Wolf: Had a great time doing that and so now we get a chance to pick your brain so to put me on the spot.

Mike Robertson: It's kinda like the brain of the straw man but it sounds good to me.

Gregg Everett: Whatever works. We have people on here cause it gives us a chance to not sound like idiots for a little while.

Robb Wolf: **[Laughing]** We shift the spotlight to somebody else briefly.

Gregg Everett: Yeah. Although I don't know that it totally works but so we pulled some questions off of Facebook for you. We got a few good ones and then of course we have a few of our own. First of all, why don't you just give people some background on yourself and tell

us how you get into the industry and what you're currently doing. I know you have a gym out there. It's Indianapolis, right?

Mike Robertson: Yup.

Gregg Everett: And kinda let people know what you do cause either if they're not familiar with you, which they should be of course, that would be great but if they are familiar with you, they may not know kinda the fullest extent of what you do.

Mike Robertson: Sure. I'm kinda just bounce all over, guys. To be totally honest when I came out with my undergrad degree, I really had no clue to what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to train people in some capacity but it wasn't when I got an internship at Ball State that I realized you know, 'Hey look! This is something I really like.' I worked in the weight room with the athletes at Ball State.

It really kinda melded my two passions. I love sports and I love strength training. So this was like the perfect fit for me. So for two and a half years there I did my master's work. I volunteered in the weight room. I also had a graduate assistantship in the biomechanics lab there.

So I really just loved what I did and I realize this is what I'm going to do the rest of my life. Well, unfortunately as life goes there's a lot of different paths we all take and I didn't maybe follow the traditional route.

When I was done at Ball State, I spent three years working at a chiropractic rehab facility which was miserable at the time but looking back, gave me a lot of the kind of the insights and the foundations for what I do now as far as corrective exercise goes.

So it's been three years there. I moved back to Indianapolis, spent three years there doing in-home one-on-one training and for the last four years, I feel hearten on myself, I've been running a gym called Indianapolis Fitness and Sports Training.

There we work with everything for corrective clients, post-rehab clients to fat loss, your average fat loss fizzy focus client all the way up to high level performance athletes.

We kinda run the game at anybody that is interested and feeling better, moving better and proving their performance is probably going to like our gym and like what we have to offer.

As you guys can tell I've been all over the place. I've done a little bit of everything but I think that gives me a pretty unique perspective on training and maybe some of the best ways to train or ways to, at the very least limit some of our ahrs along the way.

Robb Wolf: This is probably going to be wacky but have you ever done like a Myer Briggs Personality test?

Mike Robertson: Well you know I take in like three different times and each time, I got a different result. Why do you ask though? **[Laughing]**

Robb Wolf: I think that means you're like a sociopath or something like that.

Mike Robertson: I could totally be.

Robb Wolf: we just get a lot of questions. I'm sure you get a ton of questions. It's like, 'I like helping people. How should I get in and you know?' What career should I do is basically is kind of the question and like, 'I'm always nervous to recommend this like go in & open up a box' kind of gig.

Cause you have a lot of people who love athletics and loves strength and conditioning but they have absolutely no business and stay. They don't actually like people that much.

They just like being in the gym and so you know I was just kinda curious if you knew a little bit of what your personality is or like if you've seen a personality type that seems to do well in the gym environment.

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I mean you definitely need to just love being around people and you put up with a fair amount of their shenanigans and stuff like that.

If you've got kind of a short fuse or would you agree with that or what is it about your personality type do you think that made you successful plugging in to this scene and just going wild. It seems like you're still totally fired up about it and love it.

Mike Robertson: You know I think the biggest thing is a lot of trainers don't realize like it doesn't matter how good you are at exercise and I was like... cause we all start out horrible, right?

I mean I started off when I was training myself doing like flex and muscle fitness work outs. Literally body parts splits to failure, crippled for the next 3 days. That's how we all kinda start, right? Or at least most of us.

Robb Wolf: Definitely what I'm still doing man. **[Laughing]**

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Exactly. I mean if you can put your shirt on, you haven't trained hard enough that day. So we've all been through that. What gets us through say those first couple of years totally suck as a trainer and at the bottom line is it's our relationships and our ability to connect with our clients and our athletes.

I always come back to that. You can find great trainers just about anywhere because it starts with a good personality and then you take that great personality, that outgoingness or that extroversion and you take that and you meld it with the curiosity and interest in what it is that we do and a drive to get better.

I think if nothing else, I don't think I'm smarter than anybody else. I don't think I have a better personality than anybody else but I've got all these little elements that help make me successful.

I absolutely hate failure. I hate feeling like I'm stagnant or not improving as a coach or as a trainer and I do generally like people for the most part. I mean there are always tacky people out there and contrarians and people that just want to argue and make life miserable.

For the most part people are pretty darn awesome and I like working with them. So those three components have allowed me to be successful even maybe when I wasn't the best trainer or coach on the face of the planet.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Mike Robertson: So in that kind of broad brush strokes you'd probably be a little bit more in the extrovert category. Well if you're like around people all day it's kind of energizing where it's like my wife is a very, very good coach. She's a better technical coach than I am. But stick her

in a room with people all day and she's blown out like she does great like crunch numbers, doing stuff like that. She speaks like 6 languages, really good technical coach but throw her in a room of people all day and she's kinda deflated.

Robb wolf: Have you seen that kinda play out in your experience too?

Mike Robertson: Absolutely. I mean when we opened our gym you got to think when you start a gym it's not like you're going out and hiring the best train coach in your area and they're running the gym for like it's you on the floor for 12, 13, 14 hours of the day.

I definitely remember when we open I'd be up at 4:45. Be there at 5:45. Clients start at 6 and I wouldn't shut the doors till 7:15, 7:30 at night. So you got to think. That's 13 plus hours of coaching everyday and yes, I was tired, physically retired but mentally you're still kinda pimped up.

If you are working with people and they're seeing progress and they're getting better then you take a little bit of their energy and it kinda give you energy through your day. Now that and a boat load of caffeine. **[Laughing]**

Gregg Everett: You kind of alluded to this a little bit in your previous question but obviously you're known to be somewhat of a corrective exercise guy. That's kinda reputation you have. How did that come about and I don't know how best to ask this but if you could kind of redefine yourself in terms of your reputation in that regard, would you do that and how would you do that?

Mike Robertson: Yeah. You know I think it's a valid point because when Eric and myself, I always lump Eric into this group because we are very similar in that regard but when we started writing precise like Teen Nation and we started getting our names out there.

Nobody was really talking about posture maybe like Anne King & Charles Poliquin, we're talking about structural bounds but we were kind of the guys who were trying to bridge the gap between what you consider true physical therapy cause neither of us are physical therapists by trade and pure like meatheads strength to conditioning.

Cause we definitely saw there was that middle ground where you can not only make your clients and your athletes more resilient but you can improve their performance at the same time.

I think that's a huge misnomer when people talk about corrective exercising they think it's flopping around on a foam roller for ten minutes, maybe doing some stretches. If you hit your core you do some glut activation work like I think people really legitimately think that's what we do in our work outs.

So I'm okay with the fact that people think corrective exercise when they think my name as long as they understand how they approach it. I think when you really boil it down corrective exercise comes down to assessing your clients, figuring out what their specific weaknesses or limitations are and then developing a program that fills up the gaps.

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So it brings those weaknesses or those limitations up to a normal level. So now they are not fragile anymore, now they're not injured anymore and they can go about chasing whatever performance goals they have whether it's fat loss, muscle gain or just pure pounds on the bar.

So I think that's the best way I can describe it you know, that can be anything. Yes, maybe that does include foam rolling and stretching if you have the mobility of the stone golem then yeah, you can do a little bit of work.

For a lot of our clients that are stabile can they control their body in single length stance or maybe if they gas out as a fighter or a soccer player then corrective exercise to them is smarter energy system train so they can do those repeated vows.

So corrective exercise at the end of the day is just smart training and I think that's where most people tend to miss the mark.

Gregg Everett: And you had a recent blog post kind of in the same topic I believe. Is that right?

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Absolutely.

Gregg Everett:

Cool. We'll give people links to all your stuff here at the end also so you guys can check that out. So speaking of this and actually again you kinda led right into this question. Can you kinda describe what kind of evaluation you do for new athletes and clients and maybe how that changes depending on the type of client?

As you said there's obviously going to be a little bit of a difference between your typical aesthetics like fat loss client versus some high-level competitive athlete.

Mike Robertson:

Sure. We're not known for corrective exercise. I think one of the other things we're most well known for is our assessment and I got to give credit to Bill Hartman here because he's spent twenty plus years kinda pulling this entire thing together.

What we do is a very comprehensive approach. If it's the full kinda like escalate assessment that we give people we're looking at their posture. We're looking at their isolated mobility and flexibility on the table. We're looking at their gross motor movements as far as like an overhead squat, a split squat, push-up, that sort of thing.

All the way to more sport specific testing. So maybe we're testing their aerobic versus anaerobic energy system preference. We're looking at where they fit on a speed strength continuum. You know, are they really, really strong and slow or vice-versa?

So there's a ton of stuff that we want to look at. Now if we've got practical example here. I had a kid coming probably a month or two ago,, 5598 pounds, 14 years old.

As you guys can imagine, he didn't need the super drawn out assessment. I've basically watched him do the basic movements. Let me see you squat, lunge, push-up, do a plank-side-plank, that sort of thing.

And I could have told you what this kid needed. Whereas kids, they're just not generally as beat up whereas you get a 40, 50 year old weekend warrior, fat loss client, that sort of thing.

A lot of times they've got more aches, pains, boo-boos that we need to address. So we'll typically dive in a little bit more because they're going to have more limitations in their program and we're

going to need to know those early on so we can create the best program for that specific client or athlete.

Gregg Everett: And so is most of what you guys do personal training or are you working with these guys in small groups in some of the cases or what's going on?

Mike Robertson: Yeah. It's definitely small group, 2-4 at a time. I did my bed doing a one-on-one and I try and avoid that as much as possible because it's 30 seconds of work and then 90 seconds of social time.

So we really prefer the semi-private motto because it's more comfortable for the clients and they still get very comfortable level of coaching and instruction there.

One thing that people maybe misconstrue is they think that the programs are individualized because it's small group and it absolutely is. We can have a power lifter, a fat loss client and a fourteen year old female soccer player all in at the same time.

It really comes down to what that specific client or athlete needs because everybody gets a unique assessment. They get their own unique program. We just go from there.

Gregg Everett: So in other words if you have this group of 2-4 people, they could conceivably be on 4 totally different programs but you feel you're able to kinda move between them and monitor them and help them adequately during that time?

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Absolutely and another thing that people kinda miss the boat on when they hear semi-private training they assume well you got smaller groups so it should be easier and if you do semi-private right you're smoked at the end of the day.

Gregg Everett: Right.

Mike Robertson: I mean you're bouncing around between 3 or 4 people now versus 1 so it's absolutely harder but once you kinda get people in you're always going to have the people you need more time with, people that don't move as well or their on a new program, that sort of thing and they're going to need more time and attention.

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Mike Robertson: But what you find is, over the course of 3 months – 6 months a year, a lot of your clients almost become like coaches on the floor for you.

They get to moving and just feeling so good they understand what they need to do, what they need to work on, so you don't need to sit there and watch every single repetition. Maybe you watch the first 2 or 3 reps in their set, give them 1 or 2 kilos to work on and then you can move on to the next client.

Robb Wolf: Nice.

Greg Everett: Yeah, definitely there's a point where you have to learn to be a little more economical with your time. There's only so many of you and so many hours in a day.

Robb Wolf: And only so much coaching input that's gonna affect some positive change versus pissing off the client and they were so...

Mike Robertson: Yeah. You're absolutely right. There's a lot of clients that are like, "Look. I just need one thing. Give me one thing to work on and that's it." If you're standing over then coaching every rep, that puts a lot of people off as well.

So there's definitely a demographic that likes one-on-one and we definitely found that there's a demographic that likes small group and demographic that likes a boot-camp environment. Works 15 people at a time and not nearly as much instruction but they're in it for a different reason. Maybe then your semi-private one-on-one works as well.

Robb Wolf: Right. Mike, could I jump ahead a couple of things in my head? Two questions, completely unrelated.

The first one, have you followed – I have a good friend, Ido Portal. Have you followed any of his stuff?

Mike Robertson: I have not. But if you say he's legit then I'll have to look into it.

Robb Wolf: He has a super interesting background – Capoeira background, trained under Charles Poliquin, really phenomenal strength coach and athlete.

But through a lot of his stuff, he recommends a ton of joint prep that we would see out of, say, like acrobatics and ballet and gymnastics and what-not that involves putting joints through ranges of motion under controlled loading like wisp push ups in this kind of interesting squat where you've got the feet together and you kind of cork-screw the hips so that you're loading the MCL and all the knee structure in a controlled fashion but in a very non-classically ideal circumstance.

But with the idea being that you're going to work hard and more tough in this connective tissue in progressive way, do you do any tinkering with that or do you look into any of that type of stuff?

Mike Robertson: Honestly we have not now. I can understand that and I think Gary Gray does some stuff like that too where you approach inner range position where could be considered precarious position and a little bout of it.

Not to say that it's unrealistic but I would say there's definitely a risk where you need to be comfortable with. They get you working with a fighter or something like that. Maybe you warrant it. And if you're working with Grandma Betty who just wants to move and feel better and that sort of things –

So yeah there's a risk reward there, so you need to understand your client. I don't know how uncomfortable I would be with that personally, but then again I would say, as a general, who grew on a little bit more risk of herbs with my clients and athletes and maybe somebody else would be. It would be hard to say and it would probably be something I've had to take on individual basis knowing the person in front of me.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, Ido is Israeli, so he's fine with killing people. So that..yeah yeah...

Mike Robertson: [Laughing] Sure.

Robb Wolf: In the other question, a good friend of mine, Jim Wendler who's a solid strength coach, he's shot me some video of some younger kids, 15-16 years old and he does a basic movement assessment and it's been kind of crazy this stuff that he showed me where this kids literally cannot do some things like bear crawl, crab crawl, quadrupedal movements –

I mean it looks like these kids have had like traumatic brain injuries or something and he seemed that his kids are moving less well – in my case older adults – even though the adults are beat up and they’ve got some mileage, there’s just some basic innervate, and fundamental movements are kind of primal movement patterns that these people have. And these kids maybe playing some sports. They look kinda lean. They look kinda jack. But then you put them – it’s really really easy to put them into a position were they just have no idea how to move out of it or how to move properly.

Have you seen any of that or is this just something that’s going on and Kentucky only?

Mike Robertson: It’s only Jim’s clients.

[Laughing]

Mike Robertson: No, I love Jim. I love what he’s doing and I think I totally buy into that because it’s really frustrating for me as a coach because you guys have probably about the same age I am. We had very broad and diverse athletic backgrounds growing up.

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Mike Robertson: I remember there, and in the spring you play. You play T-bar or base-bar or whatever. And in the summer you play whatever you can get your hands on. And in the fog you play soccer. And in winter you play basketball.

But more importantly we had a legitimate structure in PE class where we’ve learned all these different sports. We’ve learned all these different movements. I mean, I don’t remember drilling for like two weeks how to throw a football.

Kids don’t know how to do these things anymore. If you go look at a modern PE class, a lot of times they sit around and they get a lecture then they take a test on the rules of the game or on how to perform the movements but they can’t do it. [Laughing]

I mean, it’s so frustrating. And this is a huge issue that we have and it’s something that I’m keen to look to start filling in the gaps as far as our program and what we do at our gym.

I got a couple, seniors, the kids that I've worked with for a while and now they're gonna go off to college and I think next fall, I'm gonna start a century like a young athlete development program in our gym, 10 to 13 years old, that sweet spot where they need PE. They need to be exactly active in doing things, but they're not maybe ready for full, long strength training yet.

I mean that's gonna be the whole basis of program, like kids come in, we're gonna do a dynamic form up, we're gonna get you moving, we're gonna teach you how to run, skip and jump, throw and stuff. We've got monkey bars in our gym so you can swing around on those. They mean to just teach you the basics like how to do a lunge or a push up or a goblet squat, just basic movement patterns.

These kids just don't have these things and it's really frustrating. Quite frankly, it's really sad because I mean, I've got a young one now. I mean you guys either have kids or you're about to have kids. You want the best for your kids so I just can't imagine not having that movement base or that foundation to build from.

Robb Wolf:

My nephew, Kaden, he's three years old. One of our clients put up a slack line, the kid just grew up in our gym in North Carolina. And so he's been running and tumbling and swinging on rings. The earliest times that he's been able to do it, it took him about 45 minutes playing around the slack line before he was able to stand on it and take about 5 steps on it. At age three, he's able to do a free-standing handstand out on a concrete and a pure wet out of the movement and stuff like that.

Just because he's been seeing this stuff and playing with it that I mean, it's like looking at a different species of human when this little guy's running around doing this stuff versus a bunch of these other kids that's just like, oh my God, what are we gonna do with them?

Mike Robertson:

Whether it's the foundation or you can look at the other side, the early specialization. One of my girls that comes in right now, she's playing soccer basically her whole life. Literally she plays eleven months out of a year.

Robb Wolf:

Wow.

Mike Robertson: I mean this is crazy because a while back I got to meet and work with Lori Lindsey who plays on the US Woman's National Team. And Lori said, I was asking her on the course of the conversation on how often or how much you guys train a year. She's like, "Oh, about ten and a half to eleven months."

So we have high school kids that play soccer literally as much as our US Women's National Team to us. And it's just mind-blowing to me. So they just don't get a broad base movement awareness and movement experiences to build from and we wonder why they end up with these overused injuries or they're just as a whole not athletic outside of the scope of their sport.

Greg Everett: Interesting stuff.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Well, our daughter Jane is ten. In school, they still have a PE program, thankfully. But from what I can gather it's a lot of running. It's kind of a classic, I don't know what to do with these kids so I just gonna have them run laps. There's a lot of that going on. But fortunately they definitely are playing games and like you said, Mike, it's so important for these kids to get exposure to just as large of an array of different sports and kind of styles, of movement and movement patterns as plausible because otherwise they just don't develop not only those specific abilities but they don't develop the ability to develop other abilities.

Mike Robertson: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: It just completely stuns that physical growth. It's unbelievable. I don't care if there are others playing still the baking and red rover as long as they're doing something. The idea of a ten-year-old taking a test about the rules of a game, I can't think of a more ridiculous way to spend the kids' time in school.

Mike Robertson: Coz they have a minimum writing and reading component, it's not being meddlesome mostly after prowling it in the PE program. It's insane.

Greg Everett: In football you just have to play.

Mike Robertson: Right.

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Greg Everett: I've had the rules of rugby explained to me about 45 times and I still don't understand it. [Laughing] It's not that I never played it.

Mike Robertson: Yeah, but chances are you played three times and you know exactly what you're doing, at least two in a certain extent.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Cool. Alright. Well so shall we move on to some space-phase questions?

Mike Robertson: I love it.

Robb Wolf: Well, good ones in here. So first one, Ben has, "I have read that Charlie Weingroff described the Push up plus as a cold fraudulent exercise. Are there better ways to train scapular upward rotation?"

Mike Robertson: Okay. So number one...

Robb Wolf: First let's explain what a Push up plus is in case people don't know.

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Most people when they do a push up never truly finish the movement at the top so they'll come up and they will never actively push or finish the movement with their – thinking about pushing their torsos faraway from the floor as possible.

So when you do that, you encourage your serratus anterior recruitment and development. Basically it turns your serratus on and serratus is kind of important if you ever want to put your hands over head safely coz serratus low trap, upper trap work together to adequately rotate your scapula, so there's kind of here, geeky about mechanics, not yet for the day.

Now that being said, you have to understand the context of what Charlie was saying to make that point and this is over the course of like a 30-minute diatribe that Charlie was doing in our gym. [Laughing]

But essentially what Charlie was trying to get at is that EMG is fraudulent. Okay, he hates EMG and maybe hate is a strong word but people get so obsessed with looking through things through like one little lens to either rationalize or disprove an exercise. EMG is one way to determine if an exercise could in fact be effective.

If we just wanna do EMGs all day we could say well, EMGs – we do leg extensions, that's the best thing for the quads. So if EMG said so, that's what I'm gonna do, right?

That's what Charlie is getting at there. You have to take it with a great assault. There's a lot of ways you can train serratus anterior. Push up plus is maybe one way but just because EMG readings for serratus anterior on a push up plus are through the roof doesn't necessarily mean that's the one and only exercise you need. There's a lot of different ways to develop and recruit serratus anterior beyond just looking at the readings you get on an EMG electro.

Robb Wolf: Excellent. And so, is there anything you use aside from that kind of push up or push up plus to do that, to help people get a more stable overhead position?

Mike Robertson: Sure. I do like push up plus because it does at least gets serratus going. If you follow Eric Cressey's stuff he's doing more things where he's almost in like a piked position. So you can imagine you start with a push up position then you pike yourself up like you're in a downward dog and then do hand-walks in that fashion when you're overhead. And it says that's really good for serratus and it works with very very high-level baseball players and I kind of defer to him on shoulder stuff so that's what we like.

You can look at forearm or forward wall slide versus a backward wall slide because that will groove or pattern that upward rotation mobility. There's a lot of things but at the end of the day, one of the best things you could do is take your t-spine extension better, get the scapula in a good position and then work to get them comfortable in that position.

One of the best things that we use is just like an overhead waiter's walk with a kettlebell. Get them comfortable on that position, teach them how to get their shoulder on the right position so they're not overly shrugged up or lurching forward or elbow-bent or anything like that. Get them comfortable in that position and we kind of work from there.

Greg Everett: Cool.

Robb Wolf: Nice. This one's somewhat related. Victor asks, "What is the best way to treat wing scapulae? What exercises and habits can hinder the progress of treating this?"

First of all Victor, I just want to thank you for saying scapulae and not 'scapulas'.

[Laughing]

Mike Robertson: Yes it's very good anatomical knowledge on Victor's part.

Serratus. Typically when you look at it just from a structural perspective, serratus is there to work as almost like a suction cup to keep your scapula pinned to your ribcage or to your thoracic spine. So you need anything that's gonna develop serratus is going to help. But that's the easy answer. The answer that nobody wants to hear is – let's take a look at your upper back position because we could do serratus work until the cows come home and strengthen and strengthen and strengthen and you're still winging because you're hunched over like a Notre Dame Hunchback.

[Laughing]

Mike Robertson: If your thoracic spine is in a horrible position, your scapula's always gonna be winged regardless of how strong your serratus is.

So that's one of the things that I always come back to like thoracic spine positioning is huge whether you want to squat a lot of weight...

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Over head in a snatch or an over head press, thoracic spine position and extension is absolutely critical so if you don't have that that's really where you need to start.

Greg Everett: Yeah that even came up when you and I were talking about like head position in a squat and you made the great point that if your thoracic spine is adequately mobile and you're able to actually extend and open up it's not really much of an issue.

Mike Robertson: Absolutely.

Greg Everett: So I think that again and again that's one of the most overlooked components to a lot of this just basic mobility and movement quality people are more and more in that kyphotic position and really not mobile enough. So that's a great place to start.

Mike Robertson: Absolutely.

Greg Everett: So this next one I don't have a name on it. I just looked at Facebook and I can't find it so maybe he doesn't want us to ask it but too late.

Articles like Mike Boyle's a Joint to Joint Approach to Training really opened my eyes a while back when it comes to body awareness and find at my own defects. One thing I've noticed is that pretty much my whole left side of the body is weigh more immobile than the right side of my body.

Now I do not know if it could correlate with the fact that my left foot pronates like crazy causing my toes to point inward. Is there a correlation between my left foot pronating and the left side of my body hip, shoulder being more immobile?

Mike Robertson: Yes. Now this is like the biggest can of worms you could hope to open on your guys' podcast.

[Cross-talk]

Greg Everett: I've been asked on Twitter then.

Mike Robertson: Oh yeah exactly. 140 characters or less. What I would tell this gentleman to look into first off is the Postural Restoration Institution because they have some really cool stuff and they have an explanation for this and I will do my best in 2 minutes or less to give you guys the geeky anatomy lesson for the day.

Greg Everett: You don't need to diagnose and treat the guy over the podcast.

Mike Robertson: Yeah exactly. So as human beings though we all have like a flatter left diaphragm. So we've got our diaphragm on the inside that helps us breath. Well the left side's flatter and the right side is a little bit more shaped like a dome repair shoot.

So essentially we have issues on the left side controlling and stabilizing our body and that drives all these issues. So it drives

more anterior tilt on the left side. So we're driven into changing our tilts and our hip flexors are tight.

But then on the back sides since our anterior hamstrings stretched out and they feel tight and then that tends to throw our body weight forward and our calves feel tight. So that's the general answer. We're all built like this unless your weird and your organs are flip flopping, your heart is on the right side or something crazy.

Greg Everett: I don't have a liver.

Mike Robertson: Yes. So you'll see these same patterns on a lot of people and probably the easiest way to tell if you're gonna be a candidate for this is lay on your back, whip your shirt up so you can see the bottom of your rib cage if the left lower portion of your rib cage is higher than your right chances are you need to get your diaphragm working a little bit better and that in itself is a whole another can of worms that I'm not even gonna try and open.

So yes. To answer his question there is a reason that he's probably stiffer or tighter on his left side but the fix is a really long one and an answer that I don't think anybody cares to listen to right now.

Greg Everett: Well that alone is actually some pretty interesting information so I think I'm gonna look more into that myself.

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Their stuff is really fantastic.

Robb Wolf: Mike is that going down some of the diaphragmatic release and stuff like that?

Mike Robertson: Not even so much release but a lot of times it's just quite simply your diaphragm on the left side isn't aligned very well and one of the things I'm really trying to get people to understand and buy into is this fact that if your diaphragm isn't doing its job like if you don't have stability kind of from the core outward chances are you could get injured any where up and down the kinetic chain and it wouldn't surprise me.

We see runners all the time and they come in and they're like oh I've got shins splints. I've been doing X, Y and Z our assessment still starts basically at the belly button and works our way outward.

It's really fascinating stuff when you dig and you start to realize stability really starts from the navel or mid section and works it's way outward and if you don't have that good proximal stability chances are your distal stability isn't going to be what it needs to either.

Greg Everett:

It's interesting. I like it. Okay well Kayloub. It's your lucky day bro cuz I got some questions from you. So for all you out there Kayloub actually used to be a trainer out here at Catalyst Athletics. He's taken advantage of me. Let's see. Let's do number one.

[0:34:56]

Thoughts on Olympic weight lifting for rotational sport athletes. I think crassy sites and ongoing study regarding little correlation between sagittal strength development and rotational sports performance.

He agrees that there are some carry over but believes there's a better way to train rotational athletes specifically baseball players. Thoughts on that Mike?

Mike Robertson:

Yes and just so you guys know this question, I saw it on the book face this morning and it almost prompted like this entire rant/blog post that I'm still pretty sure I'm gonna rant.

Again it comes down to specificity right? And a lot of what Eric does involves rotational med ball throws. It's very specific from a movement pattern perspective to what we see in his sports of choice which is baseball.

Now again I don't know everything that Eric does and this more of a general rant on Olympic lifting in general so hopefully this is good for you guys.

The thing that bugs me and it's not even so much Eric. I love Eric but there's a lot of strength coaches out there that constantly have this debate or argument like oh the Olympic lifts take too long to learn and they take too much time to coach and all these that and the other.

At the end of the day it comes down to one or two things. Look if you can't coach the lifts that's fine. I really don't mind that but say you can't coach the lifts or number two if you're just flat out lazy and you don't want to coach them I get that too but say that.

It's really frustrating for me because I'm not by any means or any stretch of the imagination this amazing Olympic weight lifter and I'm definitely not an amazing Olympic weight lifting coach but I still see the value and the benefit of the lifts and from a general perspective there's a reason they're beneficial.

Just like squatting doesn't look anything like hitting a baseball or whatever it doesn't mean there's not carry over. So it's that whole general to specific continuum.

So with all due respect to Eric. He and I agree on 99% of stuff. This is probably one thing where I'd say look the power and the strength development we can definitely argue. There's definitely some benefits there.

I think the bigger reason Eric probably doesn't like this specifically for baseball players and I would agree with him whole heartedly here is he doesn't want to beat up those major joints that they need - so their shoulders, their elbows, their wrists.

So for him it's more of the risk to reward, maybe catching the bar than it is the Olympic lifts themselves that he has an issue with. That's kind of my mini side rant for the day and that's not geared at all towards Eric.

It's really frustrating when people are like oh well. The Olympic lifts take so long to coach. Well you take 6 months to get somebody to squat right? If it's beneficial take your time and teach them how to do it.

So total side rant on my part but it's really frustrating for me because I think as an industry a lot of coaches want like the quick and easy fix and that's just not always the case. If you want to work with somebody for 2, 3, 4 years you owe it to them to give them the best foundation possible and to give them all the things that you think would be most beneficial for them.

Greg Everett:

Yeah. I couldn't agree more with that. All right. So Kayloub's question number two.

With Mike's power lifting background how has he been integrating weight lifting into his training philosophy and programming?

Mike Robertson: If we're looking point blank at my training I don't really incorporate it simply because I don't feel like I have the command of the lifts myself to do that and I don't have somebody there all the time to work with me.

Now with that being said would I be interested in learning the pulls and that sort of thing. Yes. Absolutely. Now I'm 33 years old. I'm not the athletic demon that I was maybe 14 or 15 years ago. So for myself I don't use them a bunch but it's not totally specific to what I want to get out of my own strength.

Now with my athletes absolutely. I use the lifts. I coach the lifts. A lot of times early on maybe we just start with foundational stuff. So instead of teaching them a hand clean or that sort of thing maybe I teach them the positions with a medicine ball or I teach them the body positions with a jump or that sort of things.

But we're always laying that foundation so once they have the mobility, the stability, the body mechanics and awareness then absolutely. If I have the time, if I'm gonna have a couple of months or years to work with this kid I want them to learn the lifts because I feel there's that much benefit with regards to improving speed, power and strength development.

It's kind of a no brainer for me. So even though I'm a power lifter and I may not use them all that often in my own training I'd like to think being a power lifter or a corrective guy or whatever you want to call me I can take a step back and look at the big picture and see what is gonna make this kid the best athlete possible.

[0:40:04]

That includes using the lifts and absolutely I'm gonna use them.

Greg Everett: Well Robb when you were competing in power lifting you were using power cleans and stuff like that right?

Robb Wolf: Yeah and it's kind of interesting the two guys that coach me they were both world champions Danny Thurman and Rich Woods

were really prominent in the late 80s, early 90s and then all the reading that I was doing at the time was Fred Hatfield stuff and he transitioned from Olympic lifting to power lifting and he had this idea of compensatory acceleration like always trying to move the bar fast.

Basically I just use the power clean as what we would now probably call like a speed accessory movement and usually did a lot of power cleaning, did a lot of conventional dead lifting as well as high bar, narrow stands, back squatting and then when I get ready for a competition I widened everything out and it felt like it was cheating.

It just felt easy. I never was worried about depth. I always had good good speed off the floor and stuff like that. It was dead simple and this was wearing a belt and basically ace bandages for knee raps back in the dark ages yeah.

Mike Robertson: If you read a lot of the old power lifting stuff and I'm kind of a historian cuz I love reading like the how old timers train in the 50s and the 60s and at the starting point for modern strength training. When you read a lot of their stuff a lot of these guys would talk about they would just power clean up to a point where they couldn't power clean it or hang clean it anymore and then they just start dead lifting it.

So their warm up is like all right I'm gonna power clean this til 3:15 and then okay I can't power clean anymore so now I'm gonna start dead lifting it.

Greg Everett: And then gulps it down and drinks some milk.

Mike Robertson: Yeah. Exactly and did 20 reps of plots right?

Greg Everett: Yeah. Awesome. So still on the Olympic lift theme here. Kayloub asks what are the technical priorities for teaching athletes the Olympic lifts. When the Olympic lifts are only a component of the athletes program how much time do you spend teaching them positions, movements, speed and load?

What technical things do you prioritize for example hook grip, front squat rack position, first pull, sting over the bar or do you go the joke hand route with push jump punch?

Mike Robertson: Well first off I think Kayloub is giving me far too much credit for my knowledge and experience with the old lifts but when it comes down to it if you look at body positions the body positions you get into an Olympic lift are incredibly similar to positions you would be on a sporting field.

So it's not like you're teaching them these two totally different things. Good body position and body awareness is important regardless of what sport you're playing. It's an important component of what do you do in the gym.

So once you have those basic body positions down and hopefully you have a foundation that you've built from med ball stuff and jumps and that sort of thing - once they have that foundation I don't think it's a huge leap or huge stretch to teach them the lifts based off of that.

As far as the things that I try and focus on I just want to teach them the basics of the lifts, teach them good posture, connection with the bar using the latch to keep the bar enclosed to the body. Again Kayloub I think gives me far too much credit for my coaching prowess of the list because at the end of the day he's right.

You're coaching an athlete. This is one component of what could be 10 different exercises and stretches that they do on a warm up or on a work out. So in no way shape or form am I claiming to have your guys' experience or background with that but teach them the basics and I think some times with athletes if you go the push jump punch route you could do a lot worse.

Like Joe Kin had obviously had an incredible amount of success over the years so maybe start with push jump punch and then you refine from there.

Greg Everett: Yeah. I think that's good advice and just to add to that I think what you prioritize quite simply is safety. It's the number one rule. You don't hurt your athletes and so no matter what you want to teach them whether it's the Olympic lifts or the power lifts or anything you have to teach them first what's gonna allow them to do the later more complicated things safely and effectively.

So you do teach them positions first and Mike made a good point with of coming to the hang positions and the lifts. Incredibly

similar to kind of the classic athletic ready stance and so all those things really kind of play well together and if you layer that foundation properly then the rest of the stuff just kind of takes care of itself.

[0:44:56]

Mike Robertson: Maybe one of the biggest difference is that I at least talk about with my athletes is that Olympic weight lifting or not even Olympic weight lifting but just like lifting weights in general maybe one of the only sports were being on your heels is advantageous.

Greg Everett: We talk about that a lot too. We have a girl in here who's a relatively new weight lifter who's a soft ball player and she always wants to be on the balls of her feet and like I know you've just spend the last 22 years of your life playing on the balls of your feet but you have to learn to get on your heels and it's like such a disconnect there.

Mike Robertson: It's not just the coaching and that sort of thing but frankly a lot of people just draw from the hamstrings to do that. They just don't have that awareness. They just don't have that strength to really push back and utilize their hamstring effectively.

Greg Everett: Okay last one from Kayloub and this is actually an interesting one. I'm curious to hear your thoughts too. Mike's a knee guy. Now you're the knee guy not just the corrective guy.

Thoughts on the bounce and the recovery of the clean, full flexion, heavy loading, possible valgus equals detrimental to knee health. Kayloub I love your sentence question construction here by the way.

Mike Robertson: Yeah I'm gonna send Kayloub a bill for the consulting time he's getting here.

I'd be lying if I said I was thrilled with it when we coach any kind of squat we try and coach a neutral knee position and basically what we mean by that is foot, knee, hip in a nice alignment.

Now I'm also realistic and I realize how people tend to catch lifts and you're not always gonna be in the best position but I think

there's a big difference between how you practice and how you play.

So in practice you should understand look I'm trying to keep my knees out. I want foot - knee - hip alignment as neutral as possible. If you're going for a mac, clean and jerk or a max snatch things are gonna happen but at the same time when you go into that really heavily valgus position you gap the inside of the joints, you're putting a lot of stress on the MCL even potentially the ACL.

And on the lateral component you're really compressing the hell out of your lateral compartment of your knee possibly chewing up your lateral meniscus so I'd be lying if I said if I was really thrilled with that and I think if you watch a lot of people that do this at a high level for a long time their biomechanics or maybe how they train into shift them or skew them more towards that neutral position whereas the people that tend to get more and more beat up have progressively harder times staying healthy through training get into consistently worse positions in their training.

So I'm not sure if that kind of skips the question a little bit at all but yeah. I'm not a huge fan of it. If you can coach and cue somebody to get into a more neutral position I think they're gonna stay healthier longer and as a result end up inevitably lifting heavier weights.

Greg Everett:

And Kayloub and for every one else I just want to clarify here too that I think it's a mistake to lump the valgus knee issue in with the bounce of the cleans since they're totally different things and yes sometimes they go together because people are doing it wrong.

So I think again like you said exactly right. If you teach people to squat in a position that makes sure that the knee hinges instead of rotates well you just cut out a huge number of the potential problems right there.

So having a more ballistic loading in that bottom position suddenly is a lot less potential for disaster than if you have the hip weigh inside the foot it's a totally different thing in my opinion.

Mike Robertson:

Yeah you're absolutely right. You see when people tend to cave like that a lot of times it's indicative of a very strong muscle imbalance and if I can be very very general here more so in women than men because they tend to rely more on their quads

and their adductors to produce force or absorb force versus their glutes and lateral hamstrings.

Greg Everett: Good so that was the question I was gonna ask is when you do see the valgus knee during the recovery of a squat what do you typically attribute that to?

Mike Robertson: Yeah. I think a lot of it is glutes and lateral hamstrings because you've got to think semi tendonitis, semi membranitis, some of those medial hamstrings are more internal rotators. Lateral hamstrings are more of an external rotator.

So those are the ones that I'm gonna focus on and part of that could just be fixed with smart coaching and queuing - number one and number two building up the appropriate assistance exercises cuz a lot of times those people they always come back to you.

They don't have the glutes and hamstrings necessary to support or control themselves in that deep position so until you get those muscle groups kind of caught up and built up you can coach and queue all you want but it's not gonna look the way that it should.

Greg Everett: Right and I think it's interesting to me. I see a lot of people talking about the whole valgus knee thing and the squat and I see so many of them talking about oh well it's a flexibility issue but it's so clear that it's not.

[0:50:19]

If someone's sitting into a squat on the way down their knees are in the perfect position. They don't go valgus until they're standing up and they're getting in that sticking point of that squat. So how can it possibly be flexibility if they just demonstrated perfect mobility in the movement just in the reverse, only the eccentric component of it.

Mike Robertson: Yeah you're absolutely right.

Greg Everett: So that just drives me nuts. I don't know why that irks me so much but it does so stop talking about that. So we'll wrap it up here. You did a post a while back on your blog about a mentorship and Robb and I - I forget how we came up on the podcast recently but it did come up and I get emails all the time about internships and stuff like that so tell people more about this mentorship program

and maybe what they can do to be involved either as a mentor or a mentor-e.

Mike Robertson: Sure. Well as far as the mentorship program goes we have an online version and we're working on an offline version. So the online version is essentially is for people - we have people from all over the world that want to do stuff with us but for obvious reasons they can't come over and just hang out in Indianapolis for a month or two.

So there's the elite training mentorship and that's an online mentorship site where myself, Eric Cressi, BJ Godour and Dave the Bandman Smiths come on and essentially show you guys what we do on our staff training or our staff in services.

A lot of what I'll do is here's a program that I wrote. I'll show you the person's posture alignment, whatever and then I'll show you this is their knees, these are their goals, this is how I created program to build them better than ever supposedly.

So it's kind of a unique set up because people assume all the corrective exercises, all the things we talked about before now they can see this is actually how it unveils or how it all comes together in a smooth sequence from assessment to program design to coaching.

So we got that and then the other thing that Bill and I are currently working on is essentially the I Fast Mentorship program because we get tons of people would say I want to assess like you. So they'll come in and then they'll hang out for a day but unfortunately that's not -

It'll be like coming to you guys and wanting to learn everything that you know about training or nutrition or whatever in a day. So what we're trying to do is basically develop a comprehensive program.

So the first one that we're gonna do is hopefully here in July it's gonna be all about our assessment process. Essentially what proper movement looks like, what proper posture looks like - all the tests and assessment that we do and basically everything that we do to screen or evaluate our clients and athletes over the course of a 3 to 5 day period.

So we've got online stuff. We've got offline stuff. Basically if you want to learn more about it you can check out us out. My website is probably the best location and that's robertsonstrainingsystems.com.

Greg Everett: Cool. Well that's my final question is tell them folks how they can get more information from you.

Mike Robertson: The website is the best thing because whether it's my newsletter. I publish a weekly newsletter. I do blogs anywhere from 1 to 3 times a week. That's the best way to find out what I'm doing, what I've got going on and it's just I really feel like a very valuable source of information because all that stuff on there is true.

Now obviously there are some paid stuff that you can buy I really feel like I give away a ton of free information. I want people to understand what it is that I do, how to make themselves better and how hopefully I can help them take their performance or their physique to the next level.

Robb Wolf: Mike no matter how much free stuff you give away and even though it's optional to buy the stuff somebody will bitch about it.

Mike Robertson: Oh yeah. I've learned that numerous times.

Greg Everett: Oh man. That is true. Cool. Well Mike it's been fun. It's been enlightening. I hope you have a great day in Indianapolis. Here in California it's cloudy again like it was the last time we spoke.

Robb Wolf: Not in Reno. Woohoo.

Greg Everett: Yeah but it's like 90 mile an hour wind.

Robb Wolf: No. Not today weirdly enough.

Greg Everett: You got a little break from that one.

Mike Robertson: Thanks a ton for having me on guys. It was great and hopefully I didn't bore your listeners too much with all my geeky anatomy biomechanic stuff.

Robb Wolf: I think that's just what they needed.

Greg Everett: I was never bored. I was entertained.

Mike Robertson: Okay good.

Robb Wolf: Awesome Mike. Thanks so much.

Greg Everett: I feel like this is much more for Robb and me than anyone else.

Robb Wolf: Totally.

Mike Robertson: That's fantastic. As long as you guys are happy I'm happy.

Greg Everett: Exactly.

Robb Wolf: We are happy.

Greg Everett: Cool. All right thanks a lot Mike.

Mike Robertson: Thanks guys.

Robb Wolf: Bye.

Greg Everett: Take care.

[0:55:23] End of Audio