

Paleo Solution - 171

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Greg: Hey folks, Greg Everett here. We are Robb Wolf-less today. This particular podcast has been cursed from the start since our third time through and we're just going to make a run for it. It's just going to be Coach Kenn and me. So Robb will join us again next week and hopefully he's not hacking up a lung and the tuberculosis he apparently got today is gone by then. So real quickly check out sponsors. We got evolvefoods.com get some good kind of Paleo snacks there, some grass-fed whey protein and what have you. FrontDesk HQ if you run a gym, if you run any kind of service business. This is going to be the software you want to use. A lot of you are very unhappy with the software that shall remain unnamed but you all know what I'm talking.

So this is going to be a great replacement for that. I've seen the beta version. I've seen it working. It's awesome. We're going to be getting it here at Catalyst Athletics as soon as it's ready to go. So check out frontdeskHQ.com, get the info there, and get on the list to get started with that and then of course performance menu. Robb gave you the performancemenu.com address last time which right at this moment is not working because that site is being worked on for our big hundred issue launch. So go to catalystathletics.com/pm. So with me today we have Coach Joe Kenn. Those of you who've been following us for a while have seen me post links to his stuff from time to time. You probably know he's written a couple of articles for the performance menu and of course we sell his book a Coach's Strength Training Playbook. Awesome book.

Those of you who are super familiar with Michael Rutherford's Max Effort Black Box template, you'll remember that he credits Coach Kenn with a lot of the idea that kind of spark the ME Black Box sort of thing. So we're going to talk about that whole tier system in that book in a minute. But first of all, how are you doing?

Joe: I'm doing great, Greg. Thank you very much for having me today. I know it's been cursed but it's sometimes better late than never.

Greg: There you go. Exactly. Well the first time was entirely my fault. I had a little time zone snafu and the second time was my fault I had the worst food positioning I ever had in my life. So like I said with or without Robb we're just going through with this. It would be great. So why don't you to start off by telling people who may not know who you are yet kind of your background as both an athlete and as a strength coach.

Joe: Obviously my name is Joe Kenn. I'm 46 years old now and when I first started out my competitive athletic career was based off of a college football career at Wake Forest. I got to play two years there as a start and my first three years I was injured and that's kind of where my true passion of wanting to be a strength and conditioning coach took off. That age bracket in that early to mid 80s was really when you started to see people being hired to be just a strength or strength and conditioning coach at a larger scale. Obviously with the college rank Boyd Epley was one of the first, Dan Riley and then Coach Riley went to the NFL his high intensity training and his work with Arthur Jones truly exploded. That was kind of first strength coach's philosophy. A lot of the Nautilus principles, tempo. You know now they called it tempo and I love how Charles Poliquin has broken down the tempo and everybody loves Charles' tempo stuff.

But 20 years ago, the meat head weight lifting guys would get crazy when you would talk about four count eccentric and two count concentric which was Ellington Darden and Dan Riley and Arthur Jones from Nautilus. It's just funny how you change a couple of terminology and you lift barbel weights versus machine and all of the sudden it's got more credibility. That's kind of the way it is. The best part of when I grew up in Inward, New York. I played at Laurence High School, the same high school that my dad played with and played with my high school coach. And at my high school if you did not lift weights, you did not play varsity. At that point in time, high school was 10th, 11th and 12th. So going into your 10th grade year at my high school was a big deal to try to be on a varsity. Not very 10th graders made it. I was fortunate enough to not only make it but start and that kind of took off the whole lifting part of it.

[0:04:58] I always tell people now at this point in my career when I look back at my college football career as much as I love football and that's kind of my game, now at this point in my coaching career, I prefer lifting. At that point in time, the NC in training was very really not existence. You know you did all that work in the off season and during the in season it was like fade to black. Then the next January you're pretty much would just wrap it up, starting back where you started. It was an interesting mix. I trained extremely hard during the end season because I felt like this is what got me there. I was very average athletically tight kid. I mean I'm offensively lineman. At that point in time, I thought being the biggest, strongest guy was going to be at my advantage. And at that time in football, you know the defensive line still were two gap which means they have to cover two gaps.

And then Jimmy Johnson revolutionized moving guys up the line so to speak where he's taking linebackers making them D lineman. Taking the D lineman and making them O lineman. Taking safeties making

them linebacker and then blitzing and shooting gaps and it took away from the white knuckle type of offensive line play where you can just T off and really strength mattered. At this point in time, athleticism matters because of the way the defensive line and the talent and athleticism of these giants and offensive lineman now his first step a huge amount of time is laterally and not forward. So now the game has changed. For me, I always tell people I'm glad I don't have to play at this era because I don't know here my football career would have ended so.

Greg: Good at running in straight lines.

Joe: Yeah. I mean back then that's what you did. You had a guy over you and it was okay let's T off and best guy wins. And a lot of times strength was a huge proponent. It's still important but the athleticism and the ability to move the higher level you continue to go the more important the ability to move comes into play. So I always felt like I was a lifter first. Again, they don't give lifting scholarship. So fortunately enough I was a good enough football player to earn a scholarship and be able to study at a high prestigious academic university like Wake Forest. I got a degree. My bachelor degree is in health and sports science which if you talk a lot of people that go through weight, one of the tougher majors as an undergraduate. And then right after that because of injuries I knew my football playing career was over so I got into coaching. And I coached two years at a high school in Fort Lauderdale and then I started my college career. I had a nine year run at Boise State, the last five as the head strength and conditioning coach for all sports.

I went to Utah for about two football seasons. I was director of strength and conditioning for all sports. I went to Arizona State, had a great seven year run. My first two years there I was brought in as the head strength coach for football and then after that I took over the whole department as the head strength and conditioning coach or head sports performance coach excuse me for all sports. Spent two years at University of Louisville as director of athlete development for football. Then I took one year and opened up my own business with my wife Big House Power Competitive Athletic Training where I trained athletes out of my good friend and 17 year NFL vet Ricky Proehl plays out in Greensboro Proehlfic Park, a high levels sports facility. If you go online to proehlficpark.com, you'll see what I mean. It's a 60,000 square foot facility and it's got six athletic fields behind it.

So I was really fortunate that Ricky gave me the ability to continue to coach and learn. And now I'm going into my third season as a professional strength and conditioning coach with an NFL organization.

Greg: So you pretty much run the gamut. I mean you've got high school, college, pro and it sounds like you have just about every experience you could possibly have as a strength coach. So I want to come back to that cause we get a lot of questions about breaking into the industry and that sort of thing. But before we do that you almost touch on this a little bit, but who had been a big influences for you as a strength coach and who do you go to now for info when you're looking for something new.

Joe: The biggest influence is right of the bat was Mike Gentry who's now at Virginia Tech and who's a legend, been there since 1987, a guy that I desperately wanted to work for early in my career.

[0:10:00] It never really worked out. We cross path because we had coaches that we had known. I applied several times. It just didn't work out. But he was one of the first programs I ever saw when he was at East Carolina. We had a kid that was offered a scholarship at my high school. So that was the very first college weight lifting or strength and conditioning program I've ever seen. So of course back in those days you get a copy of that. That's what you're doing. So right off the bat, Mike Gentry was the first real name I have heard as a strength and conditioning coach at college. Then as I was playing John Gamble at the time was the University of Virginia. They had monsters. I mean it was impressive and Coach Gamble was still competing. So we'd be in the middle of the game and I'd be at the huddle and I wouldn't even hear the play call cause I'm looking on the sideline looking how big this guy is and like. So those two guys plus my college strength coach, Joey Bullock. I learned a tremendous amount from him.

Not just in the x's and o's but just coaching in general and learning from things that he did or things that I think may have helped up as I've gotten older, looked back, and said Joey would have done this so I better make sure I do this especially when it comes to justifying your program. I think a lot of times especially in this day and age, everybody is reading, reading, reading, reading, reading and I don't really care to hear you give me a reference list of books you read. I want your opinion. I think too many times guys are like well I read this article or Greg Everett said you should Olympic lift like this. And Louie Simon said you should squat like this and Mike Burgener said you should compete like this. Well what do you think? I mean I know what those guys think cause guess what I studied them too. I mean that's where the creativity, the artistic freedom sometimes is allowed in strength condition for athlete may not necessarily be allowed in some of the specific training results for Olympic lifter or powerlifter or body builders.

There's a unique things about that because at the end of the day especially in the Olympics and the powerlifts when you go to compete you compete in the lifts that you trained. When you trained an athlete none of the lifts you train, you compete in. So there's no protocol. I took a beating when I first developed this system or training the tier system because it was always well you got to train fast exercises first and then you train your strength exercises and then you train your system exercises. And you go why is that? Why is that? Well that's because that's what the protocol are. What protocol? The protocol of lifting weights. What kind of weight? Olympic lifting. Well I don't train Olympic lifters.

And I know this every coach that you talk to, that what the sport team that's lifting is either a second or third component in their athletic development so to speak. They need to last. Most competitive sports except for throwers and sprinters in track and field have to have some type of capacity component involved. And my big thing was always especially with like Olympics lifts that were those lift get you explosive. Well of course if I do those the first exercise of the day I'm going to be explosive. But I need to know what's going to happen and how I can maintain explosiveness at the end of the game. And the only way I can do that is implementing variation of Olympic or total body movements later on under a state of fatigue and measure that. That's the number I need to know. I don't need to know that a guy 10 minutes into his workout can hit a 90% clean.

I need to know what percentage he could hit 60 minutes later. And I think that gets thrown out there. I'm jumping around a little bit. But that's how kind of it evolves is where are you going. Just because a book says that, the body will adapt. And everybody talks about block training and this training. At the end of the day when you train a sport it's some type of concurrent sequence because of that practice. And very few coaches as much as they say they want to listen, sport coaches they'll always go back. And that's one thing I'd say about certain coaches out there now saying some different things about why do we have to do it just because it's said it's always been done that way. And that was my thinking in 1992. So it's an interesting component of looking at different things and developing. But to go back to what your question was those were the three main guys.

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And then as I've gone through the profession what I've learned is and one of my go to guys is Brandon Marcelo at Stanford. We were talking one day and I've heard this and I took it to heart a little early on in my career and I don't know the exact percentages. But that one saying of the 80%-20% is you spend 80% of the time on the things you need to improve on and 20% on the things that you're good on. Well I think the exact opposite. I know what my alleged reputation is in this field. I

want to be great in that. I want that to be where my greatness lies. So I'm going to spend 80% on programming for strength because I know that's going to affect the other things that is part of my job but also know that that's what I'm good at.

So that other 20% if I have a huge staff I'll hire that 20%. I'll hire a nutrition guy. I'll hire a movement guy. Do know that stuff? Yes. As a strength and conditioning professional everybody has to have to have a minimal knowledge base or even a little bit higher. And I know some of that stuff better than other. I think I do a very good job in the conditioning aspect of training athletes. But I'm not a track coach. I'm not a linear speed guy. I need to draw experience from those people. I was extremely fortunate at Boise State I had Ed Jacoby who was a world renowned jump coach and he really gave me the confidence that I knew I was on my way of being a good strength and conditioning coach. And then when I went to Arizona State, I had Greg Craft who has won multiple team national titles that supported our system or straight training and was very open with us, letting us know things that we can do to help improve our linear speed program.

And it was funny because the no. 1 thing he said was you need to get your guys stronger. So I laughed. I said well that's good cause that's what I'm good at. So I think my go to guys you know yourself in particular nowadays as I evolved into really enhancing myself in the Olympics lifts, I've competed in powerlifting since 1989. I did a couple of small meets, deadlift meets last year. I don't know if I'll hit one this year. So I've competed in powerlifting. And I've done a strong man meet. But I'm not a professional powerlifter. So it was funny several years ago my go to strength guys at that time and guys who supported wholeheartedly since about 2001 to now is Dave Tate and Jim Wendler of Elite Fitness systems. And I found it kind of funny how when we were coming up the rank in strength coaches, and I say strength coaches because there's so many different names we make up.

Hell I've made up some. It's just easy to say strength coach. I mean it's just easy that way. So I went to one of their early seminars they were doing the Westside seminars that they were doing back in the day. And Dave has really exploited his onsite, I forget. I think he calls them underground strength series or something to that effect where he brings people and then all that sponsored athletes go in there for two days of training. But I went through their Westside deal and the second day was a technique day. And there were some coaches there. Well I don't know how many of the coaches go under the board but I got under the bar because I needed Dave and Jim to teach correct techniques of the powerlift.

And I laughed because I wrote them a letter stating it's kind of funny to me that people think the Olympic lifts are so much more technical than the traditional lift of bench, squat, and deadlift. But I can tell you this, a very good powerlifting coach can make you feel pretty dumb when you break down those lifts just as much as a greater Olympic lifting coach can make you feel pretty dumb so to speak they're breaking down the Olympics lifts. And I always found it funny that you know and again a lot of it is because of federation and affiliation. But a big deal to me and I really believe this to this day was strength and condition coaches before they take a CSCS or CSCCA should sit for the level 1 club coach course that USA weight lifting offer, I think they still offer, because you're going to learn the fundamental techniques of the Olympic lift. How you use the Olympic lifts after that is your choice.

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But at least you're getting the fundamental basis of the Olympics lifts from the Olympic lifting perspective. And I laugh because we don't do enough of that on the other lift. And after going through that with Dave and Jim, I just felt like people don't understand that there's a tremendous amount of technique that goes on. And you have to understand that technique to help prepare your athletes so they can feel what you know is going to happen. And the only way you can do that as a great coach or if your ultimate goal is to be a great coach and the only people that need to know you're a great coach is your athlete. Perception is reality. I know that. The problem with strength and conditioning coaches are good, bad or ugly everything is perceived off of record.

So at the end of the day it's a lot of that Jimmy and Jones versus x's and o's and your best strength and conditioning coach is, at the college level, maybe your team's recruiting coordinator. So you got to have great people. So I think that going back to that you have to train. And I'm not necessarily, I know some guys will say and I believe this if I'm coaching powerlifters. And I learned this from Dave and his absolutely right. I'm a class 2 powerlifter. I can do a very good job with a beginner in the sport of powerlifting. But there's going to be a point because of where my strength level and my ability to strain allowed me to get to a certain point. When those athletes start to pass those of my abilities, I have to get them a coach that knows what it's like to squat 800 pounds. I got to get them a coach that knows how to squat a thousand pounds.

Fortunately, for me training athletes if you're doing the whole gauntlet of what we have to do to prepare an athlete for a specific sports and a lot of that is general physical preparation, they're not spending the bulk of their time on strength. Just like in the Olympic lifts. I need to know how to perform the Olympics lifts with quality,

exercise, technique but I have to have a terminology that's more conducive to the non-Olympic lifting athlete because their attention span is not on lifting like a lifting athlete is. They don't care about double scoops, knee re-bend. They want to know in the simplest form coach how can I get my clean up without having to worry about so many things.

Greg: Well I think that's a good point though because a lot of strength coaches make the mistake of believing hey I don't coach lifting, powerlifting, Olympic lifting whatever it is. I trained people to better football players or better sprinters whatever, so I don't really need to know this stuff. I just need to know the basics. But I would argue that your athletes are the one who needs to know the basics like you said. But you as a coach need to know as much as possible because the more you know, the better you are at making it simple. And I think you get the people who are kind of that intermediate area as coaches in terms of their knowledge about something specific about Olympic lifting and that's the worst possible place you can be. If you don't know a lot, you're probably okay. If you know a ton, you're okay. If you're kind of in that middle range then you don't really know enough to be able to simplify adequately to an athlete who is not a lifter. Because you're so overwhelmed and kind of excited about all the details that you're trying to impart all that knowledge to your athletes who don't care.

They don't want to know. They don't have time to know it like you said. So I think the more these coaches can learn about the powerlift technique, the Olympic technique, the better they're going to be at saying okay how can I prioritize, how can I simplify this like you've done a good job of and get these guys to do exactly what they need to do and know more. So we don't have to spend eight weeks learning how to power clean. We can build this into a long term progression and get them to a point where they're either doing power cleans or they're doing some kind of explosive lift variation that's more appropriate for them at any given time. So we had a conversation about this several weeks ago. We're both at Wake Forest for Coach Reeve's seminar. And so I want you to talk a little bit about. Because you are a strength coach who is definitely a proponent of the Olympic lift in some form. But you also are one who recognizes the fact that not every athlete can and should be using the lifts certainly not all of them all the time.

[0:25:00] And so kind of tell people how you make that decision. How do you say okay I've got such and such athlete or whatever team rather than doing full power cleans or whatever you might normally do. How do you make that decision to say okay now we're going to do power pulls

instead or we're going to do some kind of jump variation instead? Kind of talk about that process a little bit.

Joe: Well that process really for me evolved over a 25 year career and it's still evolving till this day. As any young strength coach when you get in it was clean, squat, bench, snatch, incline and jerk. Over time what you learn is time is a factor. The ability to accomplish mastery is based off a time that you were allow to work with your athletes. The more and more I get into this field, the less and less time you have. So it becomes now where's your bang for your buck. Where are your abilities more driven to and I'm a huge variety guy. I believe that. But without mastery and without precision and without efficiency, you're increasing the risk of injury. You're ramping up in a facility, excuse me, in part of training that really that can't happen. The number one thing that we're trying to do when we're building an athlete's body armor is obviously to put them in a sense that their confidence is high, that they've trained correctly. And we are putting them with movement choices and exercise progressions to protect their bodies from the chance of injury.

So the problem is as we've seen our bodies really weren't built for competitive sports especially violent high contacts sport and in certain joint more so than others. So we have to do a good job of developing plans that put our people in high reward less risk type category. Now getting back to that anybody who wakes up puts themselves out at risk everyday. You know I think that we would be, you'd almost be saying from a non-educate standpoint that we'll we're going to do this because it's safe. Really? You put an external object in your hands, you're not safe. I don't care what it is. I don't care if it's a hammer row hoe, a dumbbell snatch, a box jump with a weight vest, you're putting yourself at risk with external load.

You're putting yourself at risk with kids that their internal loaded strength or their gymnastic strength is so poor they might not be able to get themselves up on a pushup right without straining the shoulder. So very few things have come more into fruition for us as the block zero program came into effect. And again that's about building a sense of accomplishment and confidence in your ability that you can go to a coach and tell them hey we're slowing this process down. We have our athletes for 4 to 5 years in college. You're going to have some of your kids at the high school level from middle school which should be 6th grade through 12th grade. You don't just have to throw them to the wolves. If they're good enough athletically or in some cases great athletically, anything you do and this is general observation is probably going to enhance their abilities.

So why not let's do it right the first time instead of having to worry about well we got to get a number on. And I talked about this at meet. I remember we used to get guys in as freshmen in football, the first thing we're doing is testing them. And we're supposed to be protecting them. And we're throwing them at the highest risk that we can in the weight room as a testing situation. That makes no sense. And I'm not saying that we should all be chaste. Again that's what we did and that's just the way it was. Who knew any better? Now we all know better. A lot of guys don't even test. They test within their workout which is what I do and did that the last 6 or 7 years of my college careers. Well we don't have enough time to spend the week testing cause we don't have enough time to train them. Go ahead.

Greg: I'm just going to say you're starting to touch on it. But I want to make sure you flush it out because this is the one of the favorite things that I've heard you talk about.

[0:30:00] And you can kind of talk about the block zero thing in this too. But the fact that you guys have had to change that system where you can't come in and just test because these kids are coming to this program so physically unprepared like you said they can't do a push up properly. They don't hold the plank. They can't do a body weight squat. They don't have mobility. You know you guys are seeing this explosion like shoulder subluxation and all the sort of thing that you didn't use to see. Explain like what you believe is the root of that problem and kind of how you have to change your approach or these other high schools and college strength coach who had to change their approach to address that.

Joe: The biggest thing is the lack of free play at the adolescent level. If you are in my age bracket or even the mid 30s, you could go out any day of the week and see kids playing whether it was in the street, in a park, it just never matter. I mean you were out of the house. I mean I was out of the house. I came home from school. I put whatever I did my books whatever it was and I was back out in the street playing. You hardly even see it. It's amazing to me how it's changed. The computer era has changed that. More people worry about who they're texting, who's doing this, and the ages are incredible. You got kids in 6th grade who got cellphones. So what are they doing? They're spending more time with social interaction than physical play.

So what does that done? One aspect it's given you no sense of general physical preparation and the ability to learn how to move without someone telling you how to move. On the other end of the spectrum is those that are doing sports at an early age but has specialized so early who plays soccer 12 days a week on three different clubs, who plays youth travel baseball for four different teams during the

summer. So now there's that over specialization with no general physical preparation that's leading to the high level of adolescent orthopedic injuries that are on the rise at this point in time.

So what we've had to do is total rebuild. We're the general physical preparation coaching. We're the general specific coaching. We're the physical preparation coaches. We're backwards in our society. We specialize first and then worry about the other stuff. Well by then these kids have so many issues whether it's in balances, over compensation, kids have a Tommy John surgery at 12 years old. That's a shame. Who's to blame? I don't know. I mean society had made this chase for the all might scholarship and the search for greatness to a point where we're willing to sacrifice long term health to our kid's joint than we are to them chasing the golden dream so you can say well my kid won the youth you know 12 and under baseball state title.

Greg: And then retired at 13.

Joe: Yeah. Then the kid didn't want to play anyway. So I think from that standpoint it's really come to a fruition of and block zero came into play because of training age. You know we always talked about what's an athlete training age. Well to me when you train with me for the first time you're at training age zero. Just like my sons are pretty decent lifters. I brought them to a point. But if I shift them out to train with you, your program is very different than mine. Their training age is zero with Catalyst Athletics. With me, they're training age is one is 8 and one is at 5. So when I got a freshman class do I study their abilities, do I look at where they came from whether it be a strong high school program or a strong private sector coach that I respect. Yes. But at the end of the day our terminology, our teaching progressions, our ability to ride a program is going to be different. So they are a training age of zero. And I think that that investment in time no matter when a kid comes into your program is highly important.

[0:35:00] And everybody is block zero program is probably going to be similar in some movements, slightly different in organization of others because then it becomes how much time do you have to invest. If you're doing it in a high school gym class and the typical class is 50 minutes you probably really got 30. Cause you got 10 upfront and 10 at the back end that these kids got prepare to go. So you have to factor all that into your programming design. I've tell those people all the time. You can write the greatest program on paper but until you run through it, you're going to find flaws. Because it all goes back to what are you going to get accomplish and then how much time do you have to accomplish that in. And again hat goes back to the art part of program

design not necessarily so much the science. Science is extremely important. I really believe that.

And people get on me sometimes cause I talked about I am the research or you know my research is in my weight room. Because when I look at research and my good buddy, one of my other go to guys, Matt Ray. One of the best, now he's not very young, but at one point he was an up and comer in strength training research in the United States. And he came and saw his training and I would tell him what we're doing. He goes you can't do that. You can't do that. And I said come and watch my guys train. Because you'll not just see my best guys do it, you're going to see my team do it. And he's say well you're 10 years, 5 years ahead of what the research is. And I go that's my problem with research is most of it is a review of literature. I want to know what's going on now. The only way I'm going to know what's going on now is to travel and talk to coaches that are doing it now.

Because by the time it gets to a research journal, it's already passed by. Now there's other things that research are important to as far as effects of metabolic and stuff. But I'm talking about specific about what happens in weight rooms. Because I'm a strength guy and that's what I'm going to bear my bones on when I go down swinging is strength is a component that's needed for all the other things that we can talk about in a development of athleticism. So I got to make sure that that's on point cause that's going to help all of our stuff. And so an exercise technique is important with that. The older the athlete becomes, the more mobility is a factor especially at a professional level, especially at a professional football level. I really truly believe this. Like I've said I've been very fortunate and extremely humbled to work from 10 years old to NFL all pro. And I've had some of the best people work with me. Where they called assistant? Yes. But most of these guys these were my colleagues. These were my counterparts.

I just happened to be the guy who was entitled head. But I have some of the best coaches I've ever worked with that had gone on and had made a tremendous stride on their own and that was our big proponents of selling was hey what are we doing. Let's try to do something that's innovative. Let's take what everybody has done and kind of go outside the grid. Like everybody talks about big house, you know my nickname, he thinks outside the box. Well not I my box. This is my box. I believe this and that's another for young coaches. You have to believe in your programming. You want to sell your athlete so to speak or you want your athletes to really buy what you're selling or really want to listen to you, they got to see the passion and it comes from your heart and your gut.

And that's the one thing that's been exciting to me when you develop a unique system based on everything you've learned is it comes from a passion and inside that's why a lot of times I don't disregard this cause I stated this way when I started. That's why a lot of times I don't need to bring a PowerPoint presentation when I speak. I've developed a system that is so engrained in my body I can just go for hours. And I think more coaches need to be able to do that. Are there certain times you got to throw a chart up there when you're talking about lifting? Of course, if you're going to talk about technique protocol. Yeah, I get it. You want to show a slide but you should never have to look at that slide.

Greg: Well let's talk about then you talked about your system.

[0:40:00] So you have two books out currently. You got your first one Coach's Strength Training Playbook and then Push, Jump, Punch which is your kind of long term power clean progression system. So let's talk about Coach's Strength Training Playbook because that's the one where you lay out what you called your tier system which is basically a really in-depth template for programming, strength and condition programming for just about any outlet. And I think you tend to use kind of the football example which is obvious one to go with both based on your background, but also based on the fact that that's pretty much the dominant sport that strength and conditioning is going to be hooked to in this country. So tell me about kind of how that developed over the years and how did you get into the point where you said this is a solid enough system. I'm confident enough in this. I see how it works where you felt comfortable putting that in print and putting it out there.

Cause I think a lot of people under estimate the guts it takes to put that stuff on paper and put it out there for the world to see because not everyone is going to be real happy about it. Not everyone is going to come around and tell you how great you are. There's a lot of people out there who just sit around, and Rob and I talked about this in the last podcast, who sit around and just wait for stuff like that. Just snipe at you from high up in the tree tops. Who've never done anything themselves, who never contributed anything. But they just can't wait to get on you about every little flaw they find in your thing. So tell me about that whole process there cause I tell you what I sat down and I read that book in one afternoon. It was amazing. It was awesome. I refer people to it all the time. Even when I get request like hey I need you to do programming for my son high school football. Like I don't do that just buy this book. You know what I mean. You're set. So talk about that whole development there.

Joe: I'll back track a little bit so people can understand like you said when did you get the guts or when do you think like wow, do you really want to put this out there. Cause like you said it's a crazy world. That book was published in 2002 but the actual first what I would call tier system programming occurred my second year as a graduate assistant in 1992 at Boise State when I primarily started implementing it with the women's basket, women's volleyball, and women's gymnastic team at Boise State. Now what it was is kind of like I was saying. I've been a meat head every one sport sort so to speak or everyone's programming at that time was a bastardized football program.

You just got kicked down. What are we going to do for basketball? Well let's do this football program. And I didn't want that. I was given control of this team so to speak from a programming standpoint. So I was going to do things slightly different. This was also at a time when most programs that were free weight were four day a week split and then the other proponent was the high intensity which was three days a week. And I always felt that one of my personal commitments was to always be in great physical condition. And I love the weight room. But what I noticed a lot of times was in my own training it was hard to get up when you had a hard conditioning day and you had to go on a weight room or lift or you are lifting first and you knew you had to have a hard conditioning day.

So I was looking at a way were where can I make this where there's a focal point each day of the week so to speak where I don't have to worry about effort. That last thing you want to do is coach effort. The other thing was at that point in time it was a two day split, you know, upper, lower and then you would put a hand clean or a power clean or a snatch at the beginning of the day of the week that you've trained. Well most team sports at the college and the youth settings are whole body sports. You're not going to go out and play football and they tell you first half put your arms behind your back and then the second half you can't run. So why wouldn't I want to try the athlete in a whole body scenario so to speak.

[0:45:03] And that's really I learned that from my background with my college friend coach and study in the high intensity training. Cause even though it was more broken down into body parts so to speak you trained a whole body in high intensity training. Now there are a lot isolation movements but that component made sense to me. Well why wouldn't I want to train the whole body every time I walk in the weight room if that's what we're asking it to do when we take it to the sport. So then I look at it though I didn't want to do individual isolation stuff so I look at it from my standpoint of the big lifts. Well how can I do a clean, squat, dance so to speak or pull a squat variation

and a press within the same workouts without too much stress and getting quality work throughout the week?

And that's where I started looking at the templated rotation of exercises. A lot of times I think when people read a book at first, they think the tier system is based off the cycling. And cycling and intensities and load are extremely important. But the true template, a true integrity of the tier system is the structure rotation of the movement categories per day. That in itself and that's the one thing that everybody asked me. What do you pride yourself on when the tier system was changed and how you evolved what's going on in the tier system. At the end of the day my no. 1 priority is keeping the integrity of the template. That to me is the crucial way. How can I construct a better program and what I believe whole heartedly is a terrific way to train athletes without breaking the integrity of the template.

And that's how it's evolved. So going back to picking the rotation of exercises. So this is 92 we're going through and again I look at it from the old heavy moderate light system where one day you train heavy, one day you train light, one day you train moderate. And what happens with that is when you take a simple scenario such as we'll just say we're going to clean, squat, and bench the big three and we're going to do that three days a week. Heavy, light and moderate. As you know when you go into a meet, it's extremely hard to train both movements heavy in the same workout. And again in a meet it's slightly different because the volume is not as high. But in training the volume is high. It's much higher than a meet.

So if I'm going to do five sets of five on my heavy day of 85% and I'm going to do what the old rule is now I called them total body movement but your explosive or Olympic lifting movement first but your explosive or Olympic lifting movement first, your lower body strength movement second and your upper body strength movement third and all of those are going to be trained at 85% five sets of five I'm not making through that workout.

Greg: That's a tough day.

Joe: Yeah. You're not getting through. You're going to have a hard enough time getting through the cleans.

Greg: Especially when you go to go run bleachers and do drills on the field after that.

Joe: Exactly. Yeah, exactly or before. So then you go to the light day and this is before I learned about dynamic effort through Westside Barbell

and Louie Simmons writing in Powerlifting USA and the speed of movement, weight or force development and all those things I have learned after the fact. But then if you go to light day and say its five sets of five at 65% well that day maybe too easy. And then you get to your moderate day, you do five sets of five at 75% that's probably the best workout of the week. You got quality work done. You were able to achieve every repetition that was prescribed in their prescribed amount of sets and you got a nice, your body feels like it's got a sense of accomplishment.

So I look at it like okay we'll always going to test the big tree so obviously that's your foundation or your core movements. That's what we got to build our programming around in the weight room. But if you go by the old philosophy of Olympic, lower upper, you're never putting your chance to succeed in the lower and the upper body movement. So that's when I said okay these are the three major movements that we're going to do a total body, lower body and upper body one day a week this movement have to be first.

[0:50:04] So that became the heavy emphasis or the tier 1 exercise. So you hear someone say they're doing tier system session T in that area with session E, you know it was the total body movement is going to lead off. If it was session L, it's the lower body. If it's session U, it's the upper body. So that was on priority tier movement or foundation of core movement. Then tier 2 was the secondary or major movement of the day and that would be based off of the original rotation. So on session T tier 2 is L and then tier 3 is U. Then session L is LUT and then session U is UTL.

And then what we did is we look at the heavy moderate light graph and we will look at it from the standpoint of well if we felt the moderate day from an intensity standpoint was the best training day from a standpoint of workload and effort how do we make each one of those days a moderate type of average. Well very simple. Tier 1 is heavy. Tier 2 is moderate. Tier 3 is light. And then you structure your cycling based off of that. So we go back to what we talked about in the original example so now tier 1 is 85 5x5, tier 2 is 75 5x5 and tier 3 is 65 5x5. Guess what, they're getting all the work done. And I don't have to worry about well the bend was only 65 5x5 because on day 3 they're going to do their 85% 5x5. And they're going to be able to accomplish that cause they're not under the fatigue and the duress of having to do the clean and their squats first.

Greg: And they get to emphasize different thing on a different day and it will always be the last thing where like you said you're just so burnt by that point you're not into it. You can't do it.

Joe: Then when you talk about that and again the explosive exercise and this is where again it took and I'll throw back a little story as we're going through this. But then I was like okay on Wednesday your tier 3 exercise is a total body on explosive lift. And this is where like you said you got to have some guts to throw this out there because in this era you're not putting lift after a squat and incline. It's just not happening. And at that point I was still doing snatches. So it was a hand snatch. But again my theory was I have to do an explosive element with the fatigue. I got to see if these guys can maintain this day to be explosive of what I now called a power capacity or power endurance.

And we did it this way. So we developed this plan and this structure rotation of exercises and start doing it with these sports. And we're training three days a week whole body. And our women are just killing it. As the assistant and the graduate assistant, our head strength coach was still doing football and they were doing a four day split. And I was in charge of these programming. He allowed me free reign. I developed this system so in some ways I have to give Coach Thompson a lot of credit because he empowered me with the ability to do that. When you work for me later on, I wanted to continue to build this program so if you were hired by me you had to use my template. Now there's a lot of creative freedom but that template stayed in place because I wanted to see it work with other coaches implementing some of their own ideas as far as exercises and cycling.

So then it's kind of an easy sell because you know with women athletes they don't really see themselves as wanting to lift four days a week, so it kind of work into my advantage. It was very quick and deliberate. Our training time had decreased and our athletes feel better and their athleticism improved. I mean they're jumping, their ability to change direction with a running program included really took off. In 1994, when I took over football I was so convinced this could work that I knew I had to stay with this plan but I also did not have the credibility or the confidence or whatever you want to call it at that time.

[0:55:00] It was my time as a head job of telling our coaches hey we're only going to train three days a week. So that's why I created this session A, our axillary day. And that's where we did a lot more of the back work, your isolative shoulder work and things like that so we did say we lifted four days a week. It was almost a CYA day because I wanted to football coaches to think that we were lifting four days a week. So we do this and we're having success. In 1996, I hired Rich Gray as my graduate assistant/assistant. That was the only help we had. Rich is now the director of athletics for Hammer Strength and is one of my dearest friends. He's probably family. We're doing it. He goes you got to write an article on this. And I go ah. He said you go to submit an

article to the NSCA the strength and conditioning journal. That was their practical journal. Harvey Newton at that time was he the president or the editor.

Harvey pushed me over the top to finish the article. So to make a long story short, Rich literally locks me in my office and I write the article. I send it in and I know what's going to happen. I'm dealing with the NSCA who believes the typical standard protocols of allegedly lifting weight. Fast exercises first and so forth. Well know it. Sure enough I get the critics back then. You know exactly what they said. This makes no sense. You can't do that. Who says this? So now I'm pissed. I'm like F this. I knew it. And Rich, and again I owe a lot to Rich on this he calls Harvey and explains to Harvey and I don't know what was said. All I know is Rich came back and said Harvey said you got to finish this. This has to go out.

And he said just answer their questions why you do what you do. Cause I'm like do half of these guys lift weights that are right. Are they even strength coaches? Who's reviewing my paper? Now I'm defense mode. At that point, I'm 20 something years old. I just want to be a good coach and whatever. So long story short, well I'm never long story short. So I answer their question. I say exactly what we've been talking now for probably an hour. I send it out and sure enough I get published in the strength and conditioning journal and that was 1997. That was it. That was when I wrote really the first of four editions of this playbook before it was published.

So I go through, I write this book up. Cause I studied football coaches. And football coaches have playbooks. I was like why shouldn't I have one. So I wrote this book so when people work for me we have a common denominator to talk about training. So then I go to Utah and bring the program with me. Now I'm gaining more credibility now. And it was Kyle Whittingham who is now the head coach at Utah who really gave me the confidence to drop the A day because he was a weight room guy. He was a weight room liaison. Great guy. Tremendous coach. And he's always in the weight room working out so he's watching what we do. So it's my first. We finished my first one and the results are exceptional. I had great matter. It doesn't really matter what you're doing. You got really good player.

He comes down and we're just catching. We were in my office. And he goes we only trained three days a week, don't we? And I'm like ah. I was like no we train four, we have three days. He goes but really we only three days a week. I said yeah. He goes man I know you could do it that way. When he said that that A day was gone. There it is man. He gave me the confidence just like that. I mean I can almost remember where I was sitting in that strength office where he stood

right at the doorway. And as soon as he said it, I mean before he can even finish the sentence that A day was out. It continued to evolve and then at Utah I have very very good coaches. One of them was Jason Veltkamp who is now the head strength coach at NC State for football.

[1:00:00]

But made a tremendous mark with Bobby Petrino at Louisville as well as with him Arkansas. He took over from me at Utah and was there when Urban Meyer got there and had I think the liberty that year. He left for Louisville right before they went undefeated at Utah. Mark Uyeyama who just coached in the Super Bowl, he was an undergraduate assistant at the time. Cheyenne Petri who had played for me at Boise State was the head strength coach at Buffalo and then Scott Croft who is now coaching I believe at a Velocity in the Midwest was our other assistant. And then we had a student assistant. I called him Squiggy. Actually, he's still at Big John is still at Utah. He's the head strength coach for Olympics sports there. So it's kind of funny. But when we left for Arizona State I wound up hiring Cheyenne and Mark to come with me.

And that's when the tier system so to speak from a strength standpoint and from an overall program standpoint as we graduated. I took over the whole program, all the sports did it. That's when it really blossom and it was time to put it out there and just see what happen. Again I don't expect a 100% of strength and conditioning coaches to agree with it just like there's certain things that I don't agree with because I believe in what I do. But it doesn't make it right wrong as we've seen. A quality program has been enhanced. As long as a program is structured, has organization and a coach that's implementing it believe in it in his heart that this is the right way to do it, you're going to have success as long as you keep the science and certain things in play.

But if there's a non-structure program that is going there and you hit it hard everyday I think that you're getting the most bang for your buck. And then from there, I look at and I respect strength coaches who made a long term run at one program. It's hard to, you know, people say I don't look back in the past and I don't. I believe everything that's happened in my career from a professional and a personal situation with my family and stuff has happened for a reason. It's the way it was supposed to be. I look back sometime when I see a Coach Gentry since 1987 and some of these coaches have long term runs 10, 12, 14 years at different program.

I could still be at Boise State. I didn't necessarily have to leave. I choose to leave. I choose to take a couple of leaps of faith in this field and see what's up. Because I felt deep down if this program in my

mind was going to be justified as a legitimate way to train athletes, it could just happen at one spot. It had to be at different types of places with different types of kids and different type of sports. And it is all encompassing. It's an athletic based system of training. It's not a football based because you can take the same exact template and plug in very unique exercises that have a little bit more merit for other sports. Not every sport has to clean. Why would you clean an athlete like a tennis player or a baseball player when their hands and wrist are so important?

It's not worth the risk. But a clean pull or a shrug pull or a power pull that has some merit because of the hip extension component. So it doesn't have to be, at the end of the day all athletes for the most part need to do some type of hip extension, squatting movement whether it's a single leg or a double leg, a pressing movement and a pulling movement. Whatever those are that's your choices but they fit into our template.

Greg: Well I think that's why it's such an effective template because it's not a fixed program you know what I mean. It's a really clear set of guidelines to allow a coach to adapt that system to exactly the needs of his program and his athletes in whatever sports. So I think that's where the power of it comes in.

[1:05:00] We're pretty much running out of time here but I do want to finish by getting some, just getting the thoughts from you. I can't tell you how many emails we get in a week of people asking basically how do I get into the strength and conditioning industry. What do you recommend I do? What kind of certifications blah blah blah. And of course I'm not a professional strength conditioning coach. I run a private facility. I coach competitive weight lifter so I'm the last person to give advice. My advice is always pretty much go work with the coaches, the coaches you want to be like. Go intern with him. Go get a mentor if that's what you need. But can you fairly briefly kind of give these guys who are maybe just starting out in or coming out of college kind of give them a push in the right direction. What would you suggest that are a couple of big things they need to do to try to kind of break into that industry either collegiate or professional strength coaching.

Joe: Well the collegiate I think is a little bit easier because in the end we've all done it. You can apply and hopefully you have some type of contact and you can start off with this unpaid internship. It's kind of a tough deal but it's kind of the way of life in being a coach. You're going to work for free at some point if you really want it. It's a very tough grind. There are a lot of good coaches that don't last because it's a fight. I mean it's a fight everyday to make it to the next level you want to be. And volunteering is the easiest way. I would really say if

you know this is something you want to do in college and you're a college undergrad, you got to get in there and hopefully that head strength conditioning coach of that university will sit with you and get a liking to you, will then allow you to do some internships while you're still an undergrad and you can gain some credit. Cause now you're in their system.

Now it's easier for them to recommend them you for a graduate assistant position job. And then from there you should successful do a graduate assistant. Now it's easier for that coach to help you get an entry level coaching job. It's a climb the ladder and it truly is. You have to build a network. I know people like oh that's bull crap. I'll make it on my own. No one makes it on their own. No one. Again, we would need another hour for me to thank everyone of the coaches that work with me, who I have to work with from a sport coach standpoint it's just a matter of who's going to give you your break. It's like I said. I forgot who I heard this from. Like if someone works for me or comes to work with me, I know what I can do for you but what are you going to do for yourself. That is the problem. This people want you to get them in their door then they want you to keep moving them on.

What are you going to do for yourself? What is going to separate you from all the other interns that I'm going to be like that's the one. That's the next superstar. What mission are you going to take? Hey everybody is going to lift weights. At this day and age, it's the perfect time for young starting coaches to find that niche with all the buzzes of corrective measure, the nutrition aspect, recovery. All the little nuances that I say are my 20%, be that person. I'd probably hire you. Be those guys. When I worked at the University of Louisville, I had two of the best for the lack of a better term niche guys. Bryan Dermody was the best, and I don't even have to work everybody in the nation, was the best strength and conditioning coach when it came down to practicality and evaluation of screening in the correct, what people called now corrective measure programming.

I believe that in my heart till this day. Bryan is out of coaching now and he's doing ministry work but I don't care. That guy was the best. What he did and his passion for that it's second to none. And then from a practical nutrition standpoint, Adam Feit who worked with me at three different places he was the best at putting a nutrition plan that was idiot proof for athletes. He dumb it down where it made sense. And that's what it has to do. It has to make sense. So you have to be that. That to me is the no. 1 thing I think young starting coaches should do. We know you're going to know strength. We know you know you're going to do your linear speed and your metabolic and energy system stuff. But what unique thing are you going to bring

that's going to set yourself above someone else when all these resumes come into play. Be that guy. Be that woman.

Greg: Perfect.

[1:10:00]

Joe: You know there's just tremendous amount of opportunities out there. Because guys like me are going to stick to what got in there. They're expecting the new revolution to bring the new and innovative ideas. In any job fashion. You got a CEO who's 20 years and he's confident, that he's going to be the CEO, he's going to bring people that bring new and invigorating ideas to his company. It's just like I know this. We just hired a new assistant and he'll start Monday. I got to raise my game. It's go time for me now cause I got to show hey this dude is coming to work for me. I got to show why I am who I am more so than he needs to show me. So like I said that to me would be the best the best, Greg. And I know we're going to crazy maybe next time Robb won't be sick we can do a part 2 or something.

Greg: We definitely need to do a part 2 and possibly a part 3 because I think yeah we can go on and on about all this stuff. I still have like 40 more questions for you. So we'll definitely come back, do another one. And just to wrap it up why don't you tell people where they can get more info, where they can pick up your book. And you got, you're working on now a new edition of the Strength Training Playbook, right?

Joe: Yeah. I'll start with that after too many BS-ing around, I've actually started to get on my notes together and rebuild the coach's strength training playbook. It's not going to be a second edition because really except for the periodization chapter it's almost a total rewrite. And I'll be adding several chapters. I'm going to add a chapter on pro and charting the rules that we developed as well as my vision of density training which I called volume accumulation training. Those are the two major cycles that I used within the tier.

And some of the advancement that we keep the integrity but made some unique changes in things that help expedite the programming. The coach's strength training playbook can be purchased off my website that's run by my wife and my son www.bighousepower.com. It's at your website Catalyst Athletics and Dave Tate who's been a tremendous supporter of me personally and professionally carries my product on elitefitness.com and then I guess I think both books are on Amazon. My website it does have some free information. It's a subscriber based. I apologize to my subscribers that we have not done a very good job since I took this professional coaching job of keeping it up to date.

We have a lot of film. We're trying to get a staff together to help edit and get some of that staff up for the professional site as well as the free site. So those are the things we're working on. And I truly am if there's one thing I wish I could do more is apologize to people that go to this site and have invested in the membership and we have to do a better job of updating after them.

Greg: Cool. Well you got to keep your athletes playing well first.

Joe: Yeah. There's no question about that. And I hope people understand that.

Greg: Yes. They do. They love you. All right buddy. Well thank you very much for making it on. And the next time we come back and do this I'm sure we'll get it done the first time instead of the third.

Joe: I got you my man. Well I appreciate it and again I appreciate anytime we get to talk strength training. I can do it all right. I think my wife already left. I got to go help and walk the dogs.

Greg: There you go. All right man, have a good weekend.

Joe: You too Greg. See you.

Greg: Okay. See you.

Joe: Bye.

[1:13:59] End of Audio