

## Paleo Solution - 174

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Robb: Hey folks, Robb Wolf here, Greg Everett in the house. This is episode 174 of the Paleo Solution podcast. If you feel like this thing is riding a little bit heavy on the right hand side that's because we have an enormous dude with us, Mark Bell. Mark, what's going on?

Mark: Not a whole lot. Just excited to be on the show here today and talk about Paleoism.

Robb: Oh dude, we'll barely talk about food. We need to pick your brain on training so that a skinny little twerp like myself can get big and strong like you. Dude, how long have been in powerlifting? I would give you a legitimate intro here in just a minute. Did you know Rich Woods and Danny Thurman? Have you run across those guys at all?

Mark: I have not run across those guys but perhaps it's because they're west coast guys. I grew up on the east coast.

Robb: Gotcha.

Mark: And I have been involved in powerlifting since I was about 12 years. You know the first gym I ever went to was just kind of a meathead type environment. No mirrors and just old school equipment. A lot of guys doing squats, deadlifts, bench presses and things like that. At that time, it was just all about getting better and getting big and getting strong. It wasn't a divide between powerlifting and body building. A lot of the guys in the gym were squatting 700 lbs. pulling 700 lbs. and they never even really consider doing a powerlifting meet until some local powerlifting meets started to kind of show up in our area. Then guys started to go sure I think I can compete. I think I'll do okay. You know those guys are squatting 700 lbs. with ace bandages wrap around their knees and some cheap ass bodybuilding belt you know.

Robb: Right. So they possibly have some potential on that. So you know Rich Woods and Danny Thurman, those are the guys that I trained with. Both those guys at some point were world champions, American champions. But when I competed it was like 89-91 was kind of the main chunk of time that I did like the teenage powerlifting gig and all that. And Danny is still competing. He's back in Michigan I think and he had I think at one time, and this is before, I think at that time there was just like the really old single ply suits at a 165 lbs. I want to say he had a 556, a 575 something like that. So pretty solid bench. Yeah. But if people don't know who Mark is Mark is the owner of Super Training

Gym in Sacramento, California which it took me a while to put the pieces together. But you and I were both picked as one of America's top 30 gyms in the same Men's Health magazine issue.

Mark: Oh yeah.

Robb: Yeah. Yeah. So that's really cool. Mark, you've competed at both the world and American record holding level. What weight class do you typically compete in or do you bounce around a little bit?

Mark: Bounce around is a pretty good word for it when you're fat. I've competed in just about every weight class. I started as a kid at 181 and eventually competed as a super heavy weight. As of more recent over the last about three years I competed at super heavy weight 308, 275, and now I'm heading down towards 242. But I just want to say real quick a shout out to you the Paleo Solution getting in touch with John Welbourn through Kelly Starrett was really something awesome for me.

I was just getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And I was trying to get stronger at the same time and it really wasn't happening anymore. What was happening is I was just getting fatter and fatter and fatter. And Kelly kind of turned me on to the Paleo Solution and without a whole lot of effort in terms of like really "dieting" I think you mentioned in your book if you do about 80% you'll get some great results. I went from 330 to about 280. So that help stripped off a lot of weight.

Robb: And how did your strength maintain during that? What was the transformation like as far as your performance?

Mark: My strength was good. You know I think one of the main issues there was 330 was my absolute heaviness. I really only weighed that for like a day. But I think that the main thing there was I just need to strip off a lot of bloat. You know I just had a lot of, I didn't even realize how dangerous what I was doing really was being that big.

**[0:05:05]** I was extremely unhealthy. And I'm still fairly young so you don't even realize it but you're going after you goals. You got your blinders on and you're not really thinking about things down the road too much. You're thinking about just what you have in front of you. So my strength stayed pretty good. I've done 2601 total at 275 and 2629 or 2630 total at 308. So there's only a 29 lbs. between the weight classes and I did an 854 bench which is my best bench at 275.

Robb: Wow. Wow. You know it's interesting. So we get a lot of people who they complained. So you did use Paleo kind of some modified Paleo to

be able to lose some bodyweight but clearly you're maintaining a lot of muscle mass. You're maintaining some high performance. It's handy that we've got Welbourn out there because we have so many people that are just like I can't gain weight on Paleo. I can't maintain. And we've got Welbourn who will range anywhere from like 275 to 330 depending on if he's large bowel movement or you know what he's up to. And you know just kind of funny aside with him.

He'd you know 10 years in the NFL, obviously a very high level athlete, gets out of that, trying to figure out what he's going to do next, has no ACL in his right knee and is trying to total elite in powerlifting meet. So he's getting up close to like a 1000-lb. squat and everything. He's like my knee just hurts all the time and blah, blah, blah. And I was like you know you just had two daughters. He had twin daughters and he's like yeah. And I'm like do you want at their graduation to be walking around with them in a walker or do you want to be like motoring... and he's like, okay, roger that. So we've been trying to get him down to like 265. I think he's about 270 now.

Mark: He's a big boy.

Robb: He's just a big dude. All of the Welbourn are really big.

Mark: Giant elbows and kneecap and shit.

Robb: Exactly. Exactly. And you know its funny his older brother Robb is bigger than John is and then they have a middle brother Ed who still is like 6'2, 245 just like Jack big strong dude. And John will say this like he's a super nice guy and he's going to completely kick the shit out of me the next time I see him. But because he's smaller than the other two Welbourn boys, he's got a little bit of this Napoleonic complex. So you've got to do this 245 any day like back squat 500 and 600 lbs. just like bam just knock them out. And then he's got a little bit of prickish Napoleonic complex. And John is like yeah you just don't to tackle with that guy so.

So you know it's for the folks that are maybe trying to gain some bodyweight or even just maintain some bodyweight for strength athletic sports. So what did you end up doing? Like what were you doing before when you got up to 330? Was it just like put every buffet in town out of business? Every meal in like there was no thought about dietary competition and then what change after that?

Mark: I would say that first off I've always been a big kid. At 16 years old, I was about 240. So being big and being hefty is not hard for the Bell family so gaining some weight was not a huge hurdle. But I mean you know I enjoy food so I was eating fast food here and there. Eat ice

cream here and there. But I've always kind of had that little bit of a bodybuilding not that ever did bodybuilding. But I've always had a little bit of a bodybuilding background in terms of nutrition habit in terms of trying to eat a gram of protein per pound of bodyweight and that kind of thing.

So I always kept the protein real high. I think that's crucial. And then as far as the fats and the carbohydrates the healthier the fats and carbohydrates you can get the better off you're going to be. But for me when I was getting real big it was cookies, ice cream, and Carl's Jr. pretty much. Not at every meal. I wasn't terrible with it but I would say probably about 5X or 6X a week is kind of what I was doing. And you know what happen is your metabolism at a certain point slows down. I'm actually dealing with the exact opposite of that right now. My metabolism is going crazy and I can't figure out how to maintain anymore. It's just stripping away because I got myself in pretty good shape. I weigh about 255 right now. And so whatever I throw up my body, my body just chews it up and spits it out you know.

**[0:10:04]**

Robb: Nice.

Mark: But yeah what happened is your metabolism starts to slow down which you don't really want. But for those of you out there that's really struggling with gaining some size, you're going to have to make your meals more dense. I don't want to plug a bunch of product here today but...

Robb: Go for it. Go for it.

Mark: There's a product that I use that did help me gained weight. It's called SMS which is size mass strength. It is made by a friend of mine. It's just loaded with carbohydrates. But not loaded with a lot of sugar. And it's loaded with MCT fats just calorie content through the roof. So you threw some peanut butter in there, a cashew butter or almond butter or something like that and you got a shake that's just super dense. And also I've always been a big proponent of; this is huge for people that have trouble gaining weight. You got to be on top of your post workout nutrition.

I think that that is crucial. For me, currently, what I do right now is I do a 100g of protein and a 100g of carbs. Sometimes it's a little bit more on the carbs but usually about a 100g. I take a hydrolyzed whey protein because it's just loaded with branched-chain amino acids. And whey protein has been, that's the other thing too. Whenever you're any of this kind of diets, you got to use your head if Robb Wolff tells

you that you're going to hell for eating whey protein. Then you have to say to yourself well I've always had a nice relationship with whey protein. I don't want to leave whey protein just yet. So you got to kind of use your head on some of this stuff. If you can digest milk then drink milk dude. If you like you can digest something, if you feel like you're comfortable it. I don't think people also realize that your book was inspired by really nasty health issues.

So you couldn't afford to be on a diet 70% or 60% you had to really be on point otherwise it was going to compromise your health. And so when I look at Paleo Solution I look at diets like that or Carb Nite or carbohydrate back-loading you always have to go into it with an open mind but you have to utilize the data that you have from years past from what's gotten you results before, what works well for you. If a low-carbohydrate diet is not going to work for you, if you already kind of know that going in then Carb Nite is going to be a real bitch you know.

Robb: Right.

Mark: Also even in terms of like the gluten. Everyone makes a big deal about gluten, which by the way if you call in right now the gluten will be free. But everyone makes such a big deal about the gluten and some of the stuff you've written on it in the past. Of course, it's not great for you. But if you're cutting your gluten out already like if you're eating bread every single day and now you're only eating bread once a week that's good enough. You're already heading in the right direction.

So it's not like you have to cut bread out for the rest of your life or you have to starve just because you can't find, you know, if you got the choice between not being able to eat and getting a turkey sandwich with some cheese and some mayonnaise on there or something you should eat the freaking turkey sandwich. I mean if you're an athlete and lifter and your goals are going to be big and strong, you're not going to be big and strong by eating like a bird.

Robb: Right. The one caveat I've had with that is I'm still reactive to gluten it would probably strip out a couple of extra pounds of fat. But like you said people will know with a little experimentation you know do you fit in that category or you're just like I'm just generally eating better to have some lower inflammation and better recovery and all that. You know it's totally true that the constant battle that I fight and its funny the low-carb jihadist will come out of the woodwork when I start talking about tweaking this stuff for athletics. And they just fucking lose their minds you know.

And it's like the main book and the main message that I'm still focused on I love athletics, I love elite athletics but I would say like I'm like kind of 5%-10% at most involved with that and 90% of my work is involved in taking fat, sick, diabetic people and autoimmune people and trying to like give them some options that might like save their life. And other folks like Kiefer, like Nate Miyaki these guys are way more just like, they're just into the performance athletic scene.

But it's just hard like it's impossible to try to get one message across for one group of people and then not have that bleed over and have the athletes assumed that they need to be ultra low carb all the time and 100% strict and no dairy and all the rest of it. And then when they start doing that stuff and the people who are sick they're like that guy is doing it, why can't I do it.

**[0:15:00]** It's like well you're sick and dying so we have to do something different for you. I don't know why that's so complex. But I guess its job security at this point.

Mark: I do think it's sometimes irresponsible when you hear people kind of talking about these different types of diets and they don't tie any health into it. That's why I've always been a big fan of Charles Poliquin and those stuff that he's written in the past. Because you'll hear him talked a lot about the heart and the liver and kidneys and they're like you know half of the mother of dudes out there aren't talking about this. A lot of guys are just talking getting a six pack and all these other things which is great. You know guys talking about talking getting bigger and stronger but if your health is compromise everything else is going to be fucked.

Robb: Right. Right. And that's been the big feedback that we've had whether like you, Welbourn, we've been doing some work with Naval Special Warfare. If we can get people kind of 80% doing this stuff it seems like their inflammation goes down, their gut heals. They don't have much of an over reactive immune system. And then they recover faster. And then they train harder and more frequently. It's kind of interesting.

Mark: Now I would say that your diet should come, your book should actually come with a backup plan. It should come with a plunger and some baby wipes for when you do go off the diet. I mean you should just be throwing that in there for free for the catastrophic things that you're causing around the globe.

Robb: You know that...

Mark: Yeah. Maybe you can get a sponsor on there.

Robb: Totally. Totally.

Mark: When I go back to just eating whatever. It's just mayhem. It is bad. It's just like oh my god. I'm cursing you out.

Robb: That's pretty much my story. If I get a gluten dose then any bathroom within sprinting distance you just pretty much break it over and it's done. Like nobody ever uses it again.

Mark: Starbucks is always good. Have you found that that's pretty common with a lot of people you work with they start to cut some stuff out and the second they go back to it, it just hits them pretty hard.

Robb: Yes, super common. And you know like with dudes in the military we actually tell them if you're facing a pre-deployment period say like you know you're going to be deployed in six weeks start throwing a piece of bread. Start throwing a beer everyday into the mix because I had all these emails from these guys that are like typically into CrossFit they're like three on, one off, perfect weighed and measured Paleo gig. And then I have an MRE and I have the trots for five days.

And it's like yeah and you can't be like dug into a hillside you know with that happening. So we start telling these guys when you have control over your food then eat really well and then as you start facing a pre-deployment period you got to dirty the food up a little bit so that you, I always think about like the old Married with Children where Jim Jupiter came to live with the Bundy's. He was like the world's fittest man and then after a month of living with the Bundy's he died because he just couldn't survive the way that they ate.

Mark: What they always have in the cabinet Tang, right?

Robb: Right. But Al Bundy was like well kids we're like the human cockroaches. And to some degree if you're in the military or the police or whatever and you're going to be forced to have a dodgy options occasionally you got to think more cockroach than elite athletics. You need to be a little bit robust than...

Mark: You got to be able to handle whatever you're up against, right?

Robb: Yeah. Totally.

Mark: The other thing just real quick as you're talking about weight gain and you know everyone always wants to look into the diet. But the other huge factor there is you got to pick up some heavy stuff. You got to lift weights. And I always felt that a lot of the principles of bodybuilding are great. You know bodybuilders are constantly getting bash about

this or that. But they're almost always at the forefront of dieting, drugs and strength.

I mean usually at the forefront of just about anything you think of. They may be talking about low carb diets since bodybuilding existed. But a good mixture of just classic body building three sets of 10 that kind of stuff is good. And then obviously you know a little bit of powerlifting. So the way I'd always done it is I'll do a powerlifting movement as a first one or two movement of the day and then bodybuilding type movement after that try to get my pump on, trying to get swole.

Robb: You know it's interesting. So you're definitely a derivative out of the Louie Simmons kind of west side conjugate method scene, right?

Mark: Yup.

Robb: And it seems like that kind of repetition method had fallen out of favor for a long time. You know it seemed like it was speed work, max effort work and that was it. And then it seems like with you and then Brandon Lilly and some people like this repetition effort seems to be coming back into vogue a little bit.

**[0:20:05]** Like could you talk a little bit about that. Why that we see kind of a cycle or why did the repetition deal kind of fall out of vogue or has that always been there and people were just not writing about it as much.

Mark: You know repetition effort method is basically concept of bodybuilding type stuff where you're doing sets of 5, set of 6, sometimes set of 12 things like that. Brandon Lilly's concept is basically he cycles through a max effort day on one workout, a dynamic effort on another and then a repetition effort method on another day. And usually when you do that repetition effort method you just go in for like a max set of 5, max set of 6, max set of 8 whatever it is. Strong man athletes and many athletes over the years have used that. You know they'll say okay I want to do 400 for as many reps as I can and then you try to get a rep PR.

This is something that Jesse Burdick and I have utilized a lot as well. One thing I will say about reps is the real beauty of it is that you're able to plow through sticking points multiple times. So if I had to do a workout let's say your best squat is like 400 lbs. and I had you do 365 and we saw like just a slight breakdown in form at 365 then we went to 385 and again we see just a little bit more of that breakdown then we go to 400 and we see you get kind of hunch over, rounded over a little bit. So then you did three sets and you did about two sets that



were kind of ball busters. You did two reps basically at 90%+ where you got rounded over. Now the beauty of repetition is if you take something for six reps that's challenging. A lot of times they'll last about three reps, two or three reps are going to be a little bit ugly.

So now you're plowing through those sticking points more. And on top of that if you add some sets to that now you're plowing through those sticking points more often, more frequently and a little bit more safely because the weights are so heavy so the percentages are lower. You know you're going through that point. You know I don't know how long you guys have been lifting for but it seems like you both have a good background. You can almost feel it when you get stronger. I have trouble locking out my right side when I bench. And when I do set of 6 or set of 8 that right side got stuck on rep no. 4 or rep no. 5 and I got to keep going through that spot. I'm like when I finished the set if I've completed all the reps I'm like I can feel it right away. I'm like fuck I just got stronger. I can tell. I'm like that's going to work. I need to do that more often.

So that's one of the huge advantages. But make no mistake about it if you want to get strong, you do have to practice your singles and doubles and triples because it just has a completely load on your central nervous system. You know you sometimes see guys will do especially like in a case of a deadlifts where guys are already pulling the slack out of the bar and they already broke inertia. They already broke that weight off the floor. They'll do 600 for three and then they'll go to a meet and do like 625. That's not really the goal. The goal is actually to suck at reps.

Robb: Right.

Mark: You really almost want to be inefficient in a way. A lot of times the guys in my gym they're like baffled at how bad I suck at certain things. I just tell them you're better off at sucking at this than you are at the main lift and the one rep and all that. Because what that means is that it sounds kind of ridiculous or backwards in some ways but what that's telling you is that you can get more out of doing a lot less. So if you can only do Olympic style squats with 315 for sets of 8 but yet you can squat a 1080 in a meet then what that says is you can get a lot out of using less you know.

Robb: Right.

Mark: Out of using a little bit of weight. So you know I think the repetition effort method is a great method especially for people that are newer. I think you know I have people come to my gym a lot and they'll say hey I want to learn about powerlifting and I want do this, this and this.

It's almost like okay well you really only been involved for about six weeks. You know what we really need to do is you go to like a 24-hour fitness or something. I hate to say it but you need to do three sets of 10 of just like everything they have in the gym for the next like couple of weeks and then come back to me. You know because they need to get accustomed to all the different exercises. They need to kind of just really learn the real real basic and my gym is not a great place to learn some of the real basics. Cause usually people are already starting out you know lifting some pretty good weight and at least having some good knowledge of the sport.

**[0:25:05]**

Robb: That's funny. That's interesting. And when you were talking about being in the inefficient at the higher reps it reminds me of the Fred Hatfield, Tom Platz squat-off because Hatfield had just squatted over a thousand pounds. I forget what Platz is top end was maybe like 700 or 750 or something like that. But they had a squat-off at 500 lbs. and Platz ended up beating him by like 20 reps but he did high reps all the time. Fred Hatfield didn't. And so it was definitely interesting seeing the disparity there.

Mark: Yeah. That's great that they ever made that battle happened. You know it's kind of hard. You don't see that kind of stuff nowadays where guys got their egos are too much in the way. But you don't really as a power lifter the repetitions are great and you should be practicing them. I mean you should be doing sets of 20 here and there. You just got to always realize the reason why I don't do them too often is because the amount of soreness that's associated with it. It's difficult to recover from sometimes.

Robb: Right. Mark, do you have any MMA athletes that you train. We definitely have a big kind of jujitsu MMA crowd that follows the podcast.

Mark: I love MMA. I watch UFC stuff pretty much nonstop. I always got Fuel TV on watching that stuff. But I don't really train any fighters. We have trained some fighters in the past. Some of the stuff that's been extremely beneficial to them has been some of the dynamic effort type stuff. Once you get them accustomed to some of the exercises, some of the dynamic stuff has really been beneficial. Mainly, I would say the dynamic effort bench press guys would come back after about three weeks and say hey I'm really noticing a huge difference in my punching power. But in terms of training people, I don't really train people. I kind of actually I kind of hate it.

Robb: Right.

Mark: When I say that that draws more people to me. So I'm sure I'll get more email after this. You know I'll just set some outrageous price and people are like okay cool.

Robb: Like damn it. It wasn't high enough.

Mark: Yeah. I really don't want to train people. But you know the gym; Super Training is a place for me to get stronger. It was made for completely 100% selfish reasons for me to have a bunch of toys and a bunch of stuff to play with and build a powerlifting team that I can be proud of and then also just a place for myself to get stronger. Cause as I'm pushing some of these other guys they're starting to kick my ass here and there. So that's kind of the point of Super Training. Super Training isn't like a money making thing. And like I said pretty much despise training people.

But however, sometimes I do train people in a group. I do work with some CrossFitians as I like to call them. And I trained Blair Morrison who is high level CrossFitter, Ben Adlerman who is a high level CrossFitter here locally and a bunch of other guys. But that's more like in a group setting. So I recently been approached by some guys that have been in UFC in the past and we'll kind of see what happens with that. If I can train them in a group, I'll probably do it. But I spent a bunch of years training old fat ladies you know trying to get them to lose 15 lbs. and that just drain the life out of me.

Robb: Yeah. That would take starch out of your britches. That's something that you know the group format like all of the neurosis and like my husband did this to me today or you know whatever all that stuff is gone. Unless you have somebody who really has no shame and they're willing to divulge all of their dirty laundry in front of anybody which Greg and I have pretty good stories about that having run NorCal.

Mark: Isn't that amazing.

Robb: Yeah. Yeah.

Mark: With the movie Bigger, Stronger, Faster. You guys have seen it, I'm sure?

Robb: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mark: You know people come up to me as if I'm like a priest or something they're like yeah man I did that. They're like telling me all the stuff they've done without me even saying anything. It's pretty funny.

Robb: Imagine that being the food guy. So normally people when we get creep out about priest typically about sex but when you're the food guy then you've got breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Where you become like the dude, you know people cruising Trader Joe's and they see you and they stick the child over their shopping cart so you can't see the Little Debbie snack cakes they have and everything. It's like dude I really don't care. Man, it's your gig.

**[0:30:03]**

Mark: Yeah.

Robb: So you know...

Mark: If you want to die young that's not a big deal.

Robb: And put me into your will and I'm cool with that. Mark what do you think and I know this probably super nebulous because different people have different fighting styles and all that sort of stuff. But do you have some benchmarks of where you would see like an average MMA or Brazilian jujitsu athlete. Like they need obviously a good cardio base, good anaerobic base but then you need a good strength base for that.

But you know would you have some kind of off the cuff benchmark numbers of like a squat, a deadlift, a press, a weighted chin that you know that would want to see as probably a baseline like a bare minimum. And also an upper bound where it's like okay more strength towards for this person is probably not going to benefit them in their sports.

Mark: I don't really think so. With somebody like Nick Diaz or Nate Diaz, the Diaz brothers, you know those are guys who can greatly benefit from strength training. But I hate to put like a benchmark on it because as I mentioned earlier some people can get a lot more out of less. And I think the higher level athlete, the higher the skill level take like Michael Jordan for example. Like did Michael Jordan ever really need to squat 400 lbs? No. But he's in there training hard and he clearly got a lot of his strength and condition programs that he was doing. I remember a couple of years back there is a video of Tiki Barber doing a safety squat bar box squat off a bench and it was a high bench. He's holding out of the rack. He's like trainer spot them real close. And I really just gave him like all this stupid comments on YouTube about it.

And I just remember thinking like you know what this guy like represent like half of a percentage of population. Like this guy is cream of the crop. So the fact that he even went to the gym is going

to be a large advantage over anybody else. Some of these people are just made out of something different than the rest of us. And all the attributes and all the things that it takes to be a fighter, I mean you're in a fight. You know you watch these guys nowadays and a lot of the guys have really kind of almost turned it into an art form where you can watch a 5 round championship UFC fight like nobody even gets hurt. Like how the fuck did that happen you know. So you figure somebody will at least get clipped or something somewhere. But I think that a lot of the guys other than like some of the really really awesome guys, they sometimes just flat out forget that they're in the fight and they think about the skill and they think about I'm going to get hurt if I try to do this and I try to do that.

But he's watched Anderson Silva; Diaz brothers are a good example. Some of these guys are just flat out mean. And that's a huge attribute of fighting is to be mean and vicious and not only want to put your guy down but to really put his ass out. You know a lot of times you hear in sports I never really want to injure the guy. Well in that sport I think you have to have that mentality of really just kind of maiming and killing till the ref calls it you know. But in terms of like just flat out strength, I mean yeah you'd love to see some of these guys doing some squats, doing some deadlifts. I would say that deadlifts would almost be a must just because of the amount of overall body strength it takes and its working your grip and everything else. Squatting can sometimes be so taxing that it can actually slow some of these guys down if you're not careful. Some of these guys you're going to have, you know, I can only imagine what it would look like to see one of the Diaz brothers do a squat you know.

Robb: Right. Right.

Mark: Anderson Silva you know. He's got a short torso, long legs. His knees are going to come forward by a mile. You know it's like what the hell are you going to do with him. But a deadlift is a great thing to do and I think if you can get some of these guys to at least deadlift double their bodyweight that would be a good start to try to have them really bench press and anything heavy probably not going to happen and probably not necessary. Most of them are very lean and kind of have long limbs. This is what I deal with the CrossFitter as well and you know nearly everyone who's built like that hurt their shoulder. So they're going to need a slingshot. Basically nearly all those guys are going to have some issues with some straight up powerlifting movement. So just implementing any of those big three movements, bench, squat or deadlift would be great. But you'd have to do so pretty cautiously in my opinion.

[0:35:08]

Robb: Super slow progression. Probably a really narrow grip.

Mark: Right.

Robb: You know Fred Hatfield ages ago was talking about trying to patent this gig where you, I don't know if you would overlay it on the bench but it would allow the scapula to actually move under load which would be really interesting. But I guess you could have chain push ups and stuff like that in lieu of that. But it seems like it's interesting that you said that these guys that you've worked with get a lot of benefit out of some of dynamic effort stuff, some rate of force development which also makes sense. I mean this is what they're doing. They're trying to go as fast and explosively as they possibly can.

Mark: Well the weights lighter at the bottom and heavier at the top if you're going to accommodate resistance which means to put bands or chains on the bar, the weights are going to be heavier at the top lighter at the bottom. That actually gives you like a really nice almost like break from the actually just heaviness of handling like a regular squat. So for example you have 200 lbs. on bar weight on the bar and then you have a 100 lbs. of chains. You're going to stand up with a chains off of a box. You do a box squat. You're going to stand up now its 300 lbs. top but it's approximately 200 at the bottom. It's much more optimal weight and has a much different reaction on your body.

With the CrossFit guys I used if they say hey I got a couple of tough workouts coming out then we will actually do a workout where we just continue to add chains. We'll get to a certain weight. It might only be like 225 in bar weight and we'll just add chain until somebody dies. Basically what that's doing is its just giving them an optimal weight to push against. If you were to throw a baseball, a shot put and whistle ball which one would go the furthest. It would be the baseball cause the baseball will be the most optimal to throw far. You know there's optimal weight for each individual thing. If you want to get stronger, you'd be throwing the shot put around, right?

Robb: Right.

Mark: So there's optimal weight for certain things and the usage of bands and chains can be huge. To get some of these MMA guys to do a legitimate box squat with bands and chains. I don't think enough of them had been exposed to it yet. But I think they're going to notice a huge difference in the strength of their hips. The strength it puts on your hamstrings, your gluts, your hips. I mean these guys are going to be kicking people's heads off by doing some movements like that.

Robb: You know going back to you mention the slingshot. That's a product that you'd developed. And I've actually had some really nice benefit using it and I've actually been doing a little bit more gymnastic type work like some ring work and stuff like that in that I used the slingshot to help me with like some pseudo planche, hovering planche, push ups and everything. But tell folks what that is and kind of how you had an idea for that.

Mark: The slingshot is something that invented a couple of years ago. I actually had the idea probably about six years ago maybe even a little bit longer. And then I kind of shelved the idea once or twice just because I didn't know what the hell to do with it. And I was also told that it would never work and all that kind of stuff that you always hear happened to other people. But basically what happened was I was preparing for a powerlifting meet and I started to wear a really really big bench shirt because I injured my pec. I mean I pretty much tore it. It wasn't a full tear but it was extremely uncomfortable and I was just singing the blues. I was down in the dumps. I was like man I don't think I'm going to be able to compete in this next meet and I really want to.

So, I started to wear, I wore a big bench shirt one day in training and I just went to do just kind of a light work out. I'm like you know if I wear this bench shirt maybe that will protect me enough and maybe I can still train and maybe while I'm still training my pec will get better around the time the meet comes around. The meet was like 6 or 8 weeks away or something like that. So I trained in it and sure enough as the meet got closer my pec got a little stronger, got a little bit better, and I did my first 800 lbs. bench press with a bad wheel you know with a banged up pec. And so I kind of just was sitting there in the gym one day by myself and I'm wearing this ridiculous bench shirt made for like a 400 lbs. guy. I weighed about 280 at the time.

**[0:40:05]** The thing was just enormous. But what it was doing, those who are unfamiliar with a bench shirt it's kind of like compression gear times a thousand. But basically what its doing is its kind of catching the weight at the bottom of the bench press for you and then the weight will kind of gradually come down. So if you have 300 lbs. in the bar it's maybe catching about a 100 lbs. out of the bottom of the lift where your shoulder and pecs and all your muscles are most compromise. And so I just kind of thought to myself this is something. Like this is cool. Like I've been to every gym, I've been in every kind of gym that you can think of over the years and I remember talking to kind of the older lifters and they're saying I used to bench four plates or I used to bench this or I used to bench that. I thought to myself how do I get those people to stop saying they used to.

How do I get them to still lift these older people that are banged up? I was like there's a concept here somewhere. So then I knew a bench shirt wasn't the answer cause bench shirt cost \$200-\$300. They hurt really bad. They look awkward. There's a bunch of problems with them. So then you also can't train full range of motion in a bench shirt that actually fits you properly. It's very difficult cause you need like a 105% or 110% of your max to even start to get the weight all the way down. So then I bought a bunch of compression shirt, a bunch of under armor shirts that were way too small and basically when you go to put your clothes on in the morning before you throw your shirt over your head you just had the shirt on your arms.

Robb: Right.

Mark: I did that with some compression gear. In fact, it didn't work. But it gave me some of the idea of like okay something is going to support your arms and something is going to stretch across your chest. And it really just hurt more than anything just like dug into my arms. And I thought like well if I hurt anybody then I'm done. You know if this hurts at, all the general public is not going to accept that. And I just played around with some various ideas and was messing around with an idea with my favorite person in the world, my pops. And we just basically kind of took this wrap type thing and we're just messing around it. And then a few weeks later I went to a seamstress. I met her at a Starbucks and said hey I want this to go like this and like this and like this. And I met her there the next day. She came back with a prototype. I said can you wait right here and she said sure. So I ran into there's like a fitness 19 or something right there. Threw the slingshot on and I benched 135 for some reps and I was like holy shit. This is it.

So that was kind of the start of the slingshot. The slingshot is a support of upper body device which gives you support out of the bottom of the bench where your shoulders are the most compromise. It allows for a 10%-15% increase in the amount of weight that you can use. So normally if you're going to bench 300 you can now bench about 325-350 somewhere in that range. It also can be used for push ups, dips, some gymnastic type stuff. The main thing with the slingshot while it is a lot of fun we're like load up a bunch of weight and kind of see where you're at that kind of stuff. The main thing is just allow for a lot more volume in your training. You do more reps, more sets, safer. You know if you're again using 300 as a benchmark. If you can bench 300 then you'll be able to bench 275 for like a three sets of 8. It's going to give you a training volume that you would never normally be able to do.



I also always suggest that whenever people use a slingshot that they use a pause at the bottom, a slight pause. Cause you don't want to take advantage of that rebound too much. You know I'll be cheating too bad basically. But the slingshot gives you a nice little boost out at the bottom and then it's pretty much all you from there as you get towards the top of the lift.

Robb: Nice. I've liked it with like tuck planche push up and some you know for being a non-gymnast and being 41 years old like getting anywhere down the road with that stuff and I really feel like that stuff benefits my jujitsu too. So you shot me one of those gosh it's got to be close to a year ago now and I started playing with it. And I'll use it for 2-3 weeks and I'll drop it out of rotation for like a month and then drop it back in and I really like it.

Mark: Yeah. That's kind of the main thing with it is you know just like any other tool you know. As much as I want people to buy it and utilize it, it is just a training tool just like a knee wrap or a belt.

**[0:45:02]** It's not something that you want to have be your crutch all the time. But it's just is another tool in the toolbox that you can bring out for various reasons.

Robb: Nice. Nice. So let's talk injuries just a little bit because you've got some mileage on you. You've been competing at a high level here. You've had pec tear. What other injuries have you had and then you've been working Kelly Starrett off and on also. What have you been doing as far as different modalities like ART, what have you been doing to deal with some of the injuries?

Mark: You know I've been pretty lucky. You know I played sports all my life, power lifted for years and years probably over 20 years. And really haven't screwed myself up too bad other than a few pec tears, which in the powerlifting world would be considered minor. I have kind of torn my pec and part of the reason is just like my right shoulder just kind of sits a little funky. It's wing out a little bit. So whenever I pushed towards the top, I tend to over push with the right side. Put more stress on the right pec and bam there she goes you know. But other than that, I'd been fairly healthy. I had a little bit of a shoulder issue, a little bit of an elbow issue. And then I did take a nice wonderful spill maybe we can put a link up on your site with a 1085 and that sucker hurt pretty bad. But I don't think, I never even went to the doctor cause I'm a stubborn bastard. I don't really think I tore anything during that fall even though it was pretty nasty.

But I was off my feet for about three weeks. And I did have to do, you know when I started to come back I had to do some IRT and some

different things. A couple of things I want to say on that topic is that you know, one, don't be a pussy. Don't end up at the doctor every other day. Because from what I've seen if you end up at the doctor every other day you won't end up getting better. So that would be the first thing I said. No. 2 is don't be so foolish and so stubborn that you don't get some help. So you have to kind of use your head on that. How bad are you hurt? How bad are you injured? How bad are you banged up? After the fall, after hurting my legs I think my body was kind of preoccupied with healing all that shit up and I hurt my shoulder. And when I hurt my shoulder, that was also due to losing weight cause the range of motion in the bench presses increase greatly.

When I hurt my shoulder I went to a team of this couple that do active release. They worked on you simultaneously which is freaking unbelievable. I never had that kind of work done before. The name of that company is Kinetic Chain Sports. They're in Pleasanton, California. But they worked on me one time and they fixed my shoulder. My shoulder hurt for about two months to a point when even benching 135 was uncomfortable. I could still do it. They still had some strength there but it's extremely uncomfortable and they were able to get in there and move some stuff around. So you're going to have to find somebody who's going to be able to help you manage some of your tissues. I do not think you can really manage them that greatly yourself. I think it's like trying to tickle yourself. It just doesn't work that great you know.

I am a huge fan of Kelly Starrett. I love a lot of the things that he has to say. And he agrees with a lot of this stuff too. Laying down with a foam roller it's just not really cut it. While it may feel good and it may do a little something for you it's not going to really, if you're actually hurt, you're actually injured, you're going to have to take things a couple steps further than that to get yourself better. Some of the stuff I used from mobilitywod.com from Kelly Starrett has simply been a lot of the, just mobility drills that he has on there where you're distracting the hip with a band. I've done a lot of that kind of stuff. I think that's his most effective stuff is the stuff where he talks about basically just getting yourself into better position for the day. He's extremely brilliant. And just has so much to share that it's really hard even with all the videos he's put out.

**[0:50:02]**

If you ever have a chance to meet him or to go to one of his seminars, you need to do so because you'll be able to just get that much more from him and really kind of see or at least scratch the surface and start to really understand how much shit the guy actually knows. It's pretty mind boggling.

Robb: Yeah. I don't know if people know but Kelly is either one of or the first person to go through his DPT program. I think they're at Samuel Merritt and usually people have to, he made it through without ever having to retake a competency exam. So like you have anatomy and physiology and pathology and you know all the clinical rotations of about every three weeks you have some exams. And it's just typical like people in any given quarter they're going to repeat one or two of these things. And there's no shame in it. Everybody does it. Some people do a few more. Some people do less. But he was the first person to go through the whole program and never repeat on of the test.

Mark: Yeah. I believe it. He's absolutely brilliant. And he's got a lot to share and a lot to offer athletes. And you know I think going back to MMA for a minute. If you look at a lot of these guys especially the guys with a wrestling background I mean holy crap they have some crazy deficiencies and tightness in their bodies. So those of you guys out there that are MMA guys, aspiring MMA guys hop on [mobilitywod.com](http://mobilitywod.com) and start to fix your shit because your tissues are tight. And a lot of guys are walking around with their feet ducked out real crazy. They got the giant traps and the head forward and all kind of craziness going on. So if you can fix some of those things you're going to be able to fix your game and you won't have to, I've actually seen some of the top level guys. And you can see just even in the ring standing so awkwardly because that's the way they stood forever. And you're like man this dude is fighting sideways you know.

Robb: Right.

Mark: He's not even really giving himself a good chance to really score and land shots. While I never done that kind of fighting. You know you can still see it. They're not even able to square up properly to even defend themselves or to be on the attack either so some of that mobility stuff can really go a long way. I'll also say thought that if you're tight you're tight. And there's not really a ton that you can do about it other than fixing some of the tissues before training session and allowing yourself to get some better positions for the day. But I've never seen anyone go from being nonflexible like myself to being flexible.

Robb: Right. That's funny.

Mark: You guys have been around a long time. Have you guys ever see that? You see someone that can't like do shit and then all of the sudden they do a split.

Greg: Not all of the sudden. But I've seen some pretty dramatic improvement. But the thing is with flexibility which I like to remind people is you just need to be really fucking patient.

Mark: Right.

Greg: I mean if you spent 40 years getting tight and being tight naturally you can't do mobility wods for two weeks and expect to be doing a split. And people have really ridiculous expectations of that stuff. And like there's no magic to it. It's just like training. You got to be consistent. You got to put in the time and you just kind of suck it up and deal with the non-glamorous, super boring...

Mark: And it hurts.

Greg: Into flexibility or anything else really.

Mark: Yeah and it hurts.

Robb: And it hurts. I was going to say yeah super uncomfortable. And you know it seems like powerlifting also just kind of benefits a little bit from being a little bit tighter. I remember Fred Hatfield talking about this like Olympic lifting versus powerlifting. Like when he was Olympic lifting he really benefited from some pretty remarkable degree of flexibility like having some side split and some front split like a back walkover and stuff like that. And then as he starts getting into powerlifting because of the changes and the training he wasn't as motivated to work mobility because if he was a little bit tight in the hips like it's almost like wearing some squat brief or a squat suit or something like that. It's like you actually get a little bit of connective tissue rebound out of the whole.

Greg: I think that's true for weight lifting too. I'm definitely a lot less flexible now than I was 5-10 years ago. But it's all about the appropriate degree of flexibility for whatever activity you're doing. So you don't want to be a whole lot looser than you need to be to hit the positions you need. And so you definitely get some support in the squat if you are just as flexible as you need to hit that proper position.

**[0:55:00]** Like we get people in here who are super loose cause they've been doing yoga or like whatever weird stuff for years and they look like they get Parkinson's I think to hold a position because they're so loose like their flexibility, you know their passive flexibility is so far beyond their active flexibility. They just can't support those positions. That's probably almost as bad as being too tight.

Mark: It's officially called baby giraffe legs.

- Greg: Exactly. That is recognized term.
- Mark: Yeah. More on that same topic is I find it absolutely insane and ridiculous and it drives me fucking crazy when I see these people trying to make assessment of people with a PVC pipe or even with a barbell. It's like they don't understand like if you're strong you can't move with that shit anyway. You know it's like each person is going to be a little bit different. I understand the point of some of the drills that they're doing. And it is hard to judge, you know, coaches and things like that just off of one video. But sometimes see people doing a squat and they just got the bar and they're getting all these coaching cues and I'm like you can't really judge somebody till they start to get under a weight, under a load you know. And so that really just bugs the shit out of me.
- Greg: There was a weight lifter named Timur Taimazov a while back and I think the guy snatch like 190 or something ridiculous. And I've seen video of him warming up with 50 kilos and he can't hold the bar over head in the snatch. He's not quite flexible enough but he can snatch 190. So at that point, it's kind of like who gives a shit if he can't hold 50 kilos over head. He snatches 190. It doesn't matter.
- Mark: Right. And I think also a lot of people are making a little bit of mistake thinking that it's all mobility. It's a combination of mobility and strength to be able to really hold some of those positions and that's why sometimes female tend to struggle when they come in cause often times they don't really have as much as a lifting background. They'll come in and they have no previous strength training under their belt. And you got to have them to do the squat and they just go right through the floor. And it seems like they have no spine and you're scratching your head trying to figure out what the hell just happened. But it's not really mobility. It's more strength than anything else.
- Robb: Mark, you've been tinkering with some of the Kiefer stuff too like CarbNite, carb back-loading. Like what have you been doing...?
- Mark: Isn't that guy a ball of excitement. I know you guys have him on the show. Hopefully, I can beat out his ratings you know. He was probably as exciting as your hemoglobin topic that you had on a while back.
- Robb: Either that one or still cans and tans, breast implants, and tanning booth is still our, that one rapidly became our no. 1 downloaded show.
- Greg: Shocker.

Mark: Maybe we'll call this one a jacked and tan episode. Yeah. Kiefer stuff is outstanding. That dude is like a computer. He's got a lot of information in his head. Basically, I met with him right before I was about to do powerlifting meet. I was about 295 and as I mentioned earlier I'm about 255 now. I was able to really strip off a lot of weight by using, I used CarbNite. And I think a lot of people hear me talk about Kiefer's diet. They use it as an excuse to try to do carb back-loading and then their interpretation of carb back-loading is just don't eat all day and then eat like a pig at night. They're like dude I'm getting fatter. You're not really following the diet correctly you know.

But CarbNite is a 7 day keto diet and on that 7<sup>th</sup> day the last two meals basically you can kind of do whatever you'd like at that point. But in the beginning for me I try to keep it somewhat strict so that I could develop better eating habits. Basically, you're just eating a lot of protein, a lot of fat. The fat content was almost one to one with the protein. I probably had maybe 50g to a 100g extra protein. I didn't really count on a lot of days. But some of the days I added it up and just cause I was curious. Trying to see what the hell is going on. Yeah. The fat content was through the roof. For a while just to help you get into ketosis where you're burning up those ketones and burning up your own supply of body fat.

[1:00:00] And that was really effective for me. My boy, Jesse Burdick, he helped me out a lot. You know that's one thing about a diet it's really beneficial to have a coach. It's really beneficial to have somebody kind of walk you through it just because although someone could say hey don't eat any carbs there's still a lot of times where you're not exactly sure what to eat or what not to eat or you know how you should plan if you're going to travel. There's just a lot of things that come up in life that get in the way of you staying on the certain plan.

And so to have somebody kind of guide you through it is crucial. And in the last issue of Power Magazine, it's the magazine my wife and I produced, I had one of our staff members interview me and we talked a lot about the CarbNite diet. And currently I kind of switch more to almost like a back-loading type thing. Except when normally, when I'm being good I normally don't eat whatever I want. I normally just try to mix in some carbohydrate. But usually try to stay Paleo-ist the best I can cause I found that to be effective for me.

Robb: Nice. Nice. So many people have gotten some benefit out of the cyclic low carb approach and Kiefer you know his spin on it I think is probably the biggest improvement that we've seen on that since like Mauro Di Pasquale wrote the Anabolic Diet like 20 years ago. But that was basically what I was doing whether I was doing some Olympic lifting, some gymnastic, a little bit of sprinting. Like I could run 5% or

6% body fat, have good strength, good performance, good recovery. When I started taking room with CrossFit and as I've started doing more Brazilian jujitsu like they're so glycogen demanding I feel like I really kind of need carbs pretty much all the meal at this point otherwise I just don't recover.

I feel like I start getting some cortisol and potentially some thyroid problems if I'm pulling carbs out too frequently. So we even like a CarbNite or carb back-loading where I could potentially be doing it multiple times a week. I just don't feel like I recover that well. But that's back to your point like I think at the very beginning of the show we have this great theories and its like god this looks amazing on paper. And then when you start tinkering with it it's like I'm not doing what I need to do you know. So you got to shift gears.

Mark: From a performance standpoint, I don't think it's good to be really too deprived of anything you know.

Robb: Right.

Mark: I mean that, I mean even down to like having some like cake or a candy bar after a hard training session. Those things have psychological impact on you. You know eating something that you enjoy or having a glass of wine or any of that kind of stuff. It all runs so much deeper than some diet plan that's just kind of written out. You know there's so many other factors in there. But what I've seen in powerlifting is that guys try to diet, you know they used some sort of diet. They'll drop some weight. They'll be too deprived of something normally carbohydrates. And then they'll under perform. And they're not under performing because they have like a lack of energy. They're just under performing cause they don't still have the same leverages that they once did. And as you guys mentioned earlier about stretching the amount of patients it takes. It's the same thing. You're going to drop weight. You're going to be weaker. There's no question about it. But you can get stronger again. You got be patient with it.

Robb: Cool. Greg, can you think of anything else we should pump this guy for.

Greg: Well why don't you tell people about how they can get Power Magazine.

Robb: Check out supertraining.tv.

Mark: I don't care what people do. Supertraining.tv is a bunch of free shit that we have. We have free content all the time. It's updated every single day. I also have something called the Power Project which is on

the YouTube. You can get the slingshot at [howmuchyabench.net](http://howmuchyabench.net) along with some other products. I got some wrist wraps, knee wraps, elbow sleeves, all kind of stuff on there. I also have Power Magazine which is the only strength magazine in the world currently. So check that out at [thepowermagazine.com](http://thepowermagazine.com). There is also a digital version of that. When you sign for the digital version you'll get an entire year of back issues at a real inexpensive price. So that's a great option.

Greg: Nice. Right on.

Robb: Maybe we'll throw our show sponsor in here at the end of the show now.

**[1:05:00]** PerformanceMenu.com. Go to the Performance Menu, sign up for that, nutrition and athletics, and Nutrition Excellence. You'll get 12 free downloads when you sign up with that outstanding stuff. FrontDeskHQ.com if you have a service based business, CrossFit gym, yoga, Pilates, dog walking you name it. You can take point of sale, track clients. It's kind of the bees sneeze as we mentioned before. Evolvefoods.com, John Welbourn is involved with that as am I. Go there. You can get grass fed whey protein, all kinds of snacks, gluten-free, soy-free, low sugar or no sugar, beef jerky even though people complained whether it has sugar then it has more salt. And as Mark said you just quit caring at some point. And Mark you're doing the CrossFit powerlifting search also via west side. So how often do those happen, where can people...

Mark: Well actually I'm proud to announce that I'm in the same boat as you guys.

Robb: Okay. So you were not doing that.

Mark: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Greg: Those boats are getting fucking real low in the water.

Mark: Yeah. There's a lot of people on this boat and I don't know where we're going.

Robb: Okay. Sorry about that.

Mark: Yeah. Who's driving this boat? But you can go on [howmuchyabench.net](http://howmuchyabench.net) website. Jesse Burdick and myself are still doing powerlifting seminars around the country. Got two in Colorado coming up. One out in DC. So you can look for that there. And I just want to end by saying it was fun being on the show and that strength is never a weakness.



Robb: Thanks man. That's the best closer we've ever had on this show.

Mark: I'm the best person you've had on the show. Come on.

Robb: Clearly. We need to have you back on. Right on, man. And I do still owe you an article for your site. Like you were hitting me up just as the baby was born similar to Kiefer wanting to do some stuff. So I promise I will give that to you.

Mark: Is that code for something or do you really have a baby?

Robb: No, I really have a baby, dude.

Mark: Okay.

Greg: He uses that as an excuse for everything.

Robb: I do milk it. Come on, man. Well awesome, Mark. It was super fun having you on. I definitely I had my crib sheet of questions that I was trying to make it look like it was asking for the masses but it was actually for me. So that was super cool.

Mark: Awesome.

Robb: All right, man. Thank you. We'll talk to you soon. Be good.

Mark: I had fun. Catch you later.

Greg: See you.

**[1:07:41] End of Audio**