

# Paleo Solution - 206

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Robb: Hey folks this is Robb Wolf with episode 206 of the PaleoSolution podcast. I know we're going up a little bit late. I've been traveling a ton. Had a lot of folks in town. Just had Charles and Julie Mayfield of Paleo Comfort Foods Fame come to town, so a lot of stuff happening. I'm actually sitting in Seattle Washington with Dave Werner of Level 4 crossfit Seattle. Dave what's going on?

Dave: Robb, it's good to have you and Nicki visiting as always and up to our ears in projects.

Robb: Indeed you are which we will talk about those here pretty quickly. I'll jam through the show sponsors really quickly [wellfoodco.com](http://wellfoodco.com) Well Food Co is your place to go for grass fed beef jerky weigh protein, we have some cool stuff like non GMO grass fed type of MRE options that we're rolling out. We have some carne bars rolling out that are pretty cool so check out [wellfoodco.com](http://wellfoodco.com).

We have [frontdeskhq.com](http://frontdeskhq.com) Front Desk HQ is your mobile based solution for service based business that's actually part of the reason why we're up in Seattle is that [frontdeskhq.com](http://frontdeskhq.com) is celebrating their official grand opening of their new offices in Capitol Hill. So I'm on dad duty most of the time and Nicki's actually doing legitimate work. So Dave and I have been toodling around the gym and going through Dave's mobility class while chasing Zoë down but check out [frontdeskhq.com](http://frontdeskhq.com) if you walk dogs, massage people run a crossfit gym yoga Pilates whatever. If you interact with people and some sort of a service based business scenario, you are good to go with [frontdeskhq.com](http://frontdeskhq.com).

Who else do we have? [Performancemenu.com](http://Performancemenu.com), Performance Menu Journal of Nutrition & Athletic Excellence, two different price plans on that \$30 a year for the basic subscription \$100 a year to get you the subscription and access all the back issues. It also gets you %15 discount in the Catalyst Athletics store. Finally we have [massameats.com](http://massameats.com) Massa Meats are the folks that I get my meat from. They are based in Northern

California, used to be some clients of ours, absolutely outstanding grass fed meat. I think they're only shipping to the United States.

I don't think they're getting up to Canada, definitely not getting to New Zealand, Australia and places outside the United States. That would just be kind of silly and counter to the whole idea of locally sourced and all that. But anyway Massa meats, they're phenomenal. Massameats.com, check them out. Okay Dave, what's going on?

Dave: Robb, we're running Level 4 crossfit Seattle as you said. Things are going great there with slowly but steadily constantly growing list of clients and various problems to solve and progress to make with clients that way. And in addition to that, hard at work for the past year and really like crunch time hard at work for the past couple of months on the new website project moveskill.com which should be going up live in just a couple of weeks. Getting down to crunch time.

Robb: Yeah. So a little bit of back story here, Dave and I were talking about this actually as he was navigating the mean streets of Seattle the other day toting Zoë and I around. And I was on the Dragon Door website dragondoor.com, gosh this is probably like '99 '2000 something like that.

Dave: Early 2000 I'm thinking.

Robb: Yeah. Quite a while back and gone into the university district YMCA to do some back squats and some dude was curling in the squat rack and there was almost a fracas in tune. So I posted on the Dragon Door website hey, do you guys think that I could get by with just doing dumbbells and body weight movement and stuff like that? And Dave actually reached out to me and said hey man I've got a garage. I've got some bumps. I've got some kettlebells. Why don't you swing by and do some working out?

Dave: Which is a pretty weird thing to toss out into the...

Robb: Particularly in Seattle you never know what the intention is but...

Dave: I think I was met by deafening silence with that first email reach out so I tried again. And eventually you realize like maybe this guy's not going away unless I answer.

Robb: Right.

Dave: I think I had to reassure a couple of times like look, nothing creepy – I'm not trying to sell or experience anything.

Robb: I don't wear human skins in a dress form manner anything.

Dave: I'm just at that point just desperate for a workout partner really.

Robb: Right.

Dave: As you said I've spent a little of my allowance on some fairly indestructible gear, lumps of iron with handles, solid rubber bumper plates and just wanted some help motivating in my garage. Right? So I think we actually met...

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Robb: At a kettlebell meeting.

Dave: At a Pavel Tsatsouline Russian kettlebell kind of seminar held at the mountaineers club.

Robb: Yeah. And it was before he RKC was even unveiled or released.

Dave: Yeah. And met each other, decided this whole workout partner thing might just have a leg and went from there.

Robb: Yeah.

Dave: Started working out together in the garage. We've told that story before but years go by, things develop and you move down to Chico and our hobby expands to a vocation and we ended up moving the gym several times and now we're a pretty decent size operation for this...

Robb: 10,000 square feet and a whole lot of bodies pumping through it. See, I would definitely consider it a good size operation.

Dave: I was just comparing maybe to a more standard gym things where they might have 10,000 members.

Robb: Right.

Dave: Most of whom never show up but never mind that. It's been quite a trip as far as that goes but last time you were up, we've always of course talked about workout methods, training methods, what works for our

clients, what's not working for our clients, constant source of conversation for us. And you apparently get pinned quite a bit from folks visiting your website getting nutritional download and then asking what can I do for Monday, Wednesday, Friday workout routine?

Robb: Right.

Dave: And you get pinned with that quite a bit yeah?

Robb: Yeah. And I think that frequently in the podcast and definitely at my speaking gigs, I referenced your skill levels that you developed. And again for a little bit of back story, Dave cofounded the first crossfit affiliate up here with crossfit north at that time and then it's morphed into crossfit Seattle Level 4, crossfit Seattle. And Dave then kind of whacked me over the head with this idea that in the crossfit scene we needed to kind of quantify almost some belt type progression for people like here's a beginner, here's an intermediate, here's an advanced. Here's something that you need to be a myostatin knockout plus a bunch of anabolics to achieve like the Level 4 stuff.

But when Dave first whacked me with this idea that we needed to quantify all this stuff I was like you don't need to do that and then luckily Dave is persistent and also smarter than I am and he continued tinkering and fiddling with that stuff. And as I progressed in my own coaching and our gym in Chico, I realized that the vast majority of people that showed up were woefully inexperienced in general movement, got all kinds of orthopedic issues. They were weak as kittens even if they thought they were some sort of stud mountain biker that they really couldn't fight their way out of the paper bag. And I didn't have a really good sense of what do I tackle first?

Michael Rutherford I think was kind of one of the first people that gave some airplay to like hey, maybe we should be strong and then that will make this metabolic conditioning stuff a little bit more effective and strength before strength endurance. But that still kind of begged the question how do you progress people? And then Dave came out with this four different skill standards or fitness standards and we really – our gym, I feel quite successful and I really credit a huge chunk of that success with Dave's original skill standards.

Which if you talk to Dave, he's very quick to say well there's all kinds of problems with that stuff and I've gone on and grown and modified them and everything and he's very self deprecating in that way. But you know, the truth be told, had we not had that framework of progression versus scaling and thinking about this a little bit in kind of a belt system story like everything from the way that we just fundamentally trained people even weaving into our business systems, the fact that we have multiple program offerings and on the ramp of Level 1 and Level 2 strength, we call it LIFT Low Intensity Functional training. We have gymnastics class which is largely mobility based. All that idea came from Dave's materials.

So for just a little bit of background, folks this is how we run our gym. This is how I've recommended to folks that they run their gyms for a long time but it's kind of one thing to look at these skill standards which Dave has had on his website for ages. He's had ton and ton and ton of people checking that out when it's entirely different gig to actually implement that. This is kind of where you know, Move Skill was born. We might have had a couple glasses of wine and served something along that wine when...

**[0:10:00]**

Dave: Maybe only one or two.

Robb: Yeah.

Dave: Yeah. There's this constant tension I think between as coaches what we see is a pretty basic approach can be very useful for quite a long time. Focus on movement quality. Build strength in these good movement patterns. Extend out strength into stamina and be able to continue producing force in different directions, different joints, different positions of your body. And then get good enough at producing force that you can keep producing it and then we can incorporate it into work. It's not rocket science at its core. You start with basic stuff and you build, build, build.

There's a constant tension though between that idea where really in the end doesn't take a ton of explanation I think or it shouldn't rather, doesn't seem like it ought to. Let me quite keep qualifying this idea. But the fact is folks want to know where they stand. I'm including myself in this. We want to know how am I doing? Where am I standing? And am I

working on the right things? What should I be working on next? And the athletic skill level was an attempt to serve a couple of masters that I was trying to one, delineate a progression of just skilled development starting with the easy movements, starting with the light loads, starting with the lower skill type movements and the building step by step on that.

That process has to start by asking yourself what movements should humans be able to do? What should we even be practicing? So you start with that idea, some of the answers to that question are pretty obvious, squat, dead lift, press.

Robb: Lounge, run, crawl.

Dave: Yeah, some of this is pretty basic but after having trained people for a while, you start to notice like man, everybody has this problem or nobody gets past this point or a classic example there would be getting all the way down in a dip so that you can transition you dip into the rings well so that you can then move on to a muscle up. And folks who just try to jump ahead and go straight to muscle ups, often they're frustrated in their progress or they end up injured or side lined for a while and might have to take 2 or 3 runs at it and perhaps they give up on the way and decide I can't do that. That's not in my real house.

So my assumption was we can identify fundamental movements that people should all be practicing. We can build strength and confidence in those movements as a first individual building blocks and later as components of more complex movement patterns that we can – if we break these fundamentals into small enough increments of progress that we can – and this is I think really a – it's not a noble concept at all but its noble in its application I think. Break people's progress into small enough steps so that everybody's making progress.

And that's not the same thing as scaling. In practice in a given day or a given class, a given group, you're going to be scaling some regardless but we need as much awareness as possible on both part of the coach, the trainer and the athlete themselves of what should they be working on? It doesn't do anybody any good to be working on ring dips when they were struggled with doing a regular push-up right. And that sounds like a silly example except I see that everyday all the time.

Robb: Right.

Dave: Folks think they're doing push-ups but they're not going all the way down. Their shoulder blades are moving around visibly. Their middle sags and not really staying tight and directing force the right way. And then they're frustrated in their progress on the dips and they can't figure it out. And the answer is kind of contrary in approach but the answer seems to be stop working on dips for a while. Go back and fix your push-up and then retake another run at this progression and the next time you'll motor right on through those old limits. So that's kind of the theory concept but translating that into practical steps like fine, where do you start exactly and what do you do with people can't do a single push-up or a setup for that matter?

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And a lot of this is getting to be pretty well known. There's many, many gyms, many, many coaches now are for instance beginning folks with a squat. Okay, that's fine. And what we see I think in a population is I see this now in magazines and movements I see on TV and movements I see all around. Folks that are training certainly in crossfit and I think increasingly in other systems, their hips work better than we used to see 8 to 10 years ago. Lots of people know how to squat right now where I don't think you could've said that not too long ago.

Robb: Right.

Dave: This spread of knowledge through the internet and through popular media now looks to me like it's somewhat changed the culture a little bit. Cool but I still see quite a bit of problems in the low backs and knee pain and shoulder issues. And it's not always pain. Sometimes it's women or maybe men who aren't all that especially strong in their upper body just struggle and get stuck with certain movements. Pull-ups are hard to attain for a lot of people. This is another place where instead of scaling the pull-up down with bands or partner assist or a negative, we'd step back and ask ourselves what qualities does it take to develop the ability to do pull-ups?

Well starting with your shoulder structure it takes stable scapula so we have to go all the way back to the upper back and figure out how am I going to build this structure in the upper back so there's a solid platform there to pull from. And what that leads us to is ring rowing and horizontal

rowing, different variations of horizontal pulling, maybe rope pulling, doing inverted rows on rings at various angles, maybe doing some bent over row with barbells or dumbbells. There's a number of tools that could be used.

But focusing on horizontal pulling as well as some straight arm stabilization stuff, dip support, L-sit support, different variations of movements like that. Now we can develop strength in the upper back and stabilize these scapula and then when we take our athlete now maybe after a 6 month 8 month year long detour seems like a detour but this time when we go back and start working on a pull-up progression, they just make progress.

And so defining the areas that needed help this way, identifying the movements that were important so that everybody has a well rounded base and I ended up with 26 such movements as opposed to 5 or 8 that might've been kind of traditionally used, there's 26 movements that I've decided that these are so important we have to cook them into our basic programming. And then developing very finely graduated increments in our progression so that for folks that progress doesn't come easy, we can break these steps down.

It's not that everybody has to follow-up every step but when you noticed you or your athlete running into trouble, we have to have some tools. It's to start moving in smaller increments. I think we do this stuff automatically when the tool is a barbell. That's the value of barbells. It's so easy and obvious to see I think the method of...

Robb: Progressive overload...

Dave: Yeah, even at that though folks misuse a barbell don't they? They want to throw on 10 pounds on each side, get into a habit with that and that works fine when you're nowhere close to your limit but if you're lifting 98% of your max say 100 kilo back squat and you throw 10 kilos on, 5 on each side say, you just went up by 10%. And if you were struggling to get a couple of reps that's too big an increment.

Robb: Right.

Dave: So folks make that kind of mistake all the time. It's easy to correct though if a good coach or trainer or workout partners watching be like dude



that's a big step. Let's throw some 1 kilo plates on there and let's go for some 1% improvement. Folks tend to understand the problem and the solution pretty quickly. With body weight though, things are hard. That same progressive approach could be very hard. And defining then progressions that allow us to achieve the same effect, it's hard to carve 1% of your body weight off.

**[0:20:00]**

Robb: Right.

Dave: But by being creative sometimes, by using a movement that's an analog, maybe not an exact match, we can get some similar effect. And you have to combine other techniques, maybe some static holds, static holds in various positions increasing the leverage. So back to the athletic skill levels what I did was 8 years ago now was to define some goals that seemed to be meaningful benchmarks, goals that allowed folks to see progress and I'm hesitating here because the steps that I wrote 8 years ago all turned out too big, too large steps, too big of increments.

That said, a lot of it worked. There's many people around the world, I get input from all the world. Folks have found some usefulness in those athletic skill levels and I think it was just the concept really honestly of having some progressive goals. And one of the big values there seems to be pointing out problems like you might not notice that you're no good at L-sits because we just forget to think about them because you're too busy worried about your back squat and your military press and your pull-ups and your dips and you just forget about L-sits for a while until it's pointed out to you.

So the value of the athletic skill levels as I wrote them originally was providing people some goals to look ahead a step or two as well as a way to look back and see some holes in their game, to fix that. And it's been as you said fairly useful. I had problems though in my own gym implementing this stuff because folks, the fact is nobody really enjoys focusing on their weaknesses. That's not that much fun. It's more fun to focus on the stuff you're good at and so to that end of the athletic skill levels kind of didn't change things.

Folks still liked to focus on what they're good at and the thing they're weak at, if you can't do an L-sit and your ham strings are really tight it's

even hard to get into that position. For instance, you may realize like yeah I'd like to have stronger abs so you do some sit-ups or something or hanging leg raise maybe poorly and just call it good. What I started to realize was those skill levels needed more teaching progression explicitly kind of cooked into the goals. That teaching progression is conspicuously missing from the missing from the first version. And it was my design. I didn't intend it to be a teaching tool. I intended it to be a goal setting tool.

Robb: Right.

Dave: But over the years I realized what was really needed was a teaching tool whether you're teaching yourself or somebody else, we needed more – a good example of this would be originally at the beginning of Level 4 that one of the hip challenges was 10 pistols single leg squats per leg. And that's the first place anywhere in those levels that single leg squats get mentioned. So there's no mentioning and 10 pistols per leg is not trivial. That's a pretty significant goal. That's a real challenge.

What I've found over the years is it's a good goal and it's about in the right place in terms of the other qualities when somebody's beginning Level 3. That level of strength and movement capacity in their hips correlates well to the other skills they have at that time. But we really needed a plan to get there. So I have gone back and revisited the entire subject and re-written the athletic skill levels with teaching progressions built into them.

Then I did not attempt to define every single training trick that exist and define every tip and trick that a trainer and athlete might need to know to make progress but I did break things down into a more gradual step and we started working on things earlier in the process. And to really make sense of this you have to look at the new athletic skill levels and they're up on the web but you can find that at the Level 4 crossfit Seattle website under the knowledge link.

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Another issue I ran into though in addition to this lack of teaching progressions is a lot of people – I started Level 1 at a fairly arbitrary place with a certain amount of I assumed a certain amount on the part of the athlete. You can do 8 push-ups. You can do 30 sit-ups. You can do 50

bodyweight squats. You can hang from a bar. Your body moves and works somewhat. You've got a little bit of strength. You're not a complete non-athletic person. Not a very good athlete yet necessarily but you've got something there to work on. And the fact is...

Robb: Remarkably few people that come in our doors are at that spot.

Dave: Yeah and not intending to belittle anybody or malign their lifestyle however, most of the folks that walk in our doors can't even start at the beginning of Level 1 yet. That of course is what we do on our gym practice is bring them up to speed and there's ways to do it but I really needed call it pre-Level 1 set of progressions to even get people up to.

Level 1 for folks who haven't looked at this yet is a whole list of goals in Level 1 is my claim for defining healthy – just being healthy. Your body works pretty well. You can go for a hike. You can play with your kids. You can go swimming or water skiing or just do things work in the garden and all that stuff's going to be pretty good. You want to go up and take some skiing lessons, you're going to be fine because you're capable of the stuff in Level 1. Level 1 is not meant to be any kind of standout athlete set of standards at all.

A lot of folks are just made to be told that because down toward the end of Level 1 I have things like three pull-ups, three sit-ups and some of those goals are challenging but to thinking if your shoulders aren't strong enough to support your body weight for a bit of movement, then your shoulders are not stable, they're not safe. They're kind of waiting to be injured. If you tried to now water ski on shoulders that can't do just a couple of pull-ups, you're just begging to be hurt.

And so there's my claim like you've got to be able to do three pull-ups or you can't really claim to be healthy. So might be a little out on a limb with that definition. But Level 2 is pretty athletic. By the end of Level 2, folks can do a couple of muscle-ups. They've got a handful I think 20 pull-ups and they're pretty athletic. They can run. They can lift. They've got pretty strong hips and pretty good balance and pretty significant strong core and they can fuzz around on their hands a little bit, maybe do a few seconds of hand stand hold. We would call them athletes. Most of our culture would say wow, that guy's athletic. That lady's athletic.

That's level 2 but it's not any kind of competitive athletic level. You're not ready for a fight. You're not ready for a competition whether it's paddling or lifting or anything really. You're just well rounded athletic and as we talked about before, we needed a whole subject for pre-Level 1 to even get from – there just seems to be a lot of people who they're not hurt per say. They're not clinically hurt we wouldn't call the but the medical profession has given them a clean bill of health but they can't do much.

Robb: Right.

Dave: By our standards, by our way of looking at the world, they're definitely not healthy.

Robb: Well, if they had to hunt, gather, do framework, do soldiering like if they weren't in a pretty insulated environment then those weaknesses would be exposed and it would be a really rough haul to get up to the ability to do the work for survival and they would probably be injured in the process.

Dave: Yeah. Then this stuff happens right? One was hurricane Katrina two years ago now.

Robb: Quite a few, Sandy wasn't it...

Dave: I'm thinking Katrina in New Orleans with...

Robb: When people couldn't...

Dave: Folks had to climb on to the roof or swim for perhaps a little bit or assist the rescuers hauling themselves into a row boat maybe to survive and my understanding is some folks didn't survive that process.

Robb: Right.

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Dave: Then of course more recently hurricane Sandy. Look, not trying to be alarmist here but life doesn't guarantee us a smooth sail. Things might go wrong. I like to be maybe not prepared for everything. I'm not sure that's possible but prepared for as much as we can be. But less dire situations now, I'd like to be able to work in the garden a bit and not have to throw my back out for a month.

Robb: Right.

Dave: And I'd like to be able to play with my grand kids. It feels good and it's fun when you're strong and you can move well. That's the bottom line with that. But Robb was getting pinned constantly for workout advice and even programming Right?

Robb: Yeah and you know, I feel like I'm a good programmer. I feel like I'm a decent coach but you learn I think early in these stories that you kind of focus on the areas that you do particularly well or can articulate a message and what not...

Dave: To specialize...

Robb: Yeah. You just have to specialize to some degree and Dave's always been one of the primary people I look to when I'm having questions like well okay I'm doing Brazilian jujitsu again. What should I prioritize? I'm having some low – up on this trip, because of all the sitting I've done and the travel, I have some disk bulge issues which I never had any type of low back problems.

Dave: And you're strong too. You've always been really good at squatting and dead lifting...

Robb: Really good core awareness extension, flexion, all that and I've just developed some problems over time so I've had Dave doing a little bit of the system check on me and we're kind of fairing out some issues that I need to do. And one of the interesting things that we've actually track down is that I can do some kind of freaky stuff. I can do front levers, yewkis, back levers, hollow rock, hollow rock extension roll, pop up on my hands, snap down on my feet. I can do some stuff like that but I can't do 30 sit-ups like my abs just get tired and I'm done.

I've got this interesting window of capacity but I'm somewhere along the line, the strength endurance element of my abs, I kind of neglected it because you get busy and you're kind of like oh, things just need to be heavy. They need to be intense and I'm done.

Dave: That's such an important story right there because so many people whether they're good athletes or not good athletes, in your case, you're a very good athlete and move really well in how to practice a lot of

different specialties from capoeira and jujitsu and power lifting and Olympic lifting and you're not a neophyte to the strength and conditioning world by any means but it's still fairly easy to find big holes in our game.

Robb: Right.

Dave: And it's pretty easy trap to fall into to just go along, motor along doing what you're doing for years and not really notice these holes in the game. And our claim is that there are some fundamental capacities that really need to be addressed, attended and kind of manage as we develop where it's going to come back at some point and circle around and bite us. So I would call that 30 sit up story and some of this stuff you can do is ridiculous like folks, round Robb have often just been shaking their head at what he can pull off. He's very very strong and makes a lot of that stuff look easy too.

But when he told he had struggled with 30 sit-ups I'm shaking my head in disbelief like no way, you? And that's a glaring problem. That's an enormous glaring problem that if he hadn't already told me that his back has given him some trouble, I would've asked him that like is your back body – that's what I would expect. If he can create and direct a large amount of force through his hips but doesn't have a certain amount of strength endurance in his abdomen, yeah that's a problem.

And I'm really trying to set that up with these athletic skill levels, define through experience and through research what are the areas that matter to everybody. I'm not trying to help somebody be better at jujitsu per se but that does everybody need? That was my kind of opening question with the athletic skill levels. And you know, my answer 8 years ago was different than the answer today. That's fine. That's learning. That's growing. But...

Robb: People will crucify you for growing and learning though. It's one of the funny things about throwing anything out on the inter webs is it almost encourages the honker down tell everybody to go fuck themselves and just maintain where you're at because you kind of get crucified either way if you become the curmudgeon that never learns, then you drag along the group of people that are also delusional and think that you've

got it all figure out. And then as soon as you change gears and you're looking like okay, I need to readdress this.

Like I used to be in the very high intake official camp and then over the course of time I listen to people who are smarter than me and they explained some pretty compelling arguments that may not be a good idea and you modify it and you still get your ass handed to you by some folks. But fascinatingly, these are people that have never put an ounce of skin in the game. They've never put anything like your skill standards or a book out so that it's available for proper popular scrutiny.

**[0:35:19]**

Dave:

I did stick to athletic skill levels out on the web 8 years ago. I've gotten a lot of feedback over the years from like I said most of the English speaking world, parts all over Europe, a little bit from Asia, Australia, tiny bit from South America, Iceland and all those Scandinavian places, we get a trickle of email pretty much every week again from all over the place folks asking questions or relating some success with using this approach.

Robb put this down to self deprecation earlier but I actually don't think the original athletic skill levels were all that good of a tool in the sense that I didn't necessarily choose all the right movements that need to be chosen. A glaring mistake in those. I think now is specifying progress in a vertical jump and it turns out that vertical jump has more to do with genetic potential than training methods and while it might be possible to make a bit of progress and vertical jump, somebody who's a really lousy jumper is probably always going to be a lousy jumper even if they fix everything else.

There might be a bit of wiggle room with that statement but that's probably not the best or even a good tool to look at as a marker of progress in the realm of general fitness. Not to say somebody can't try to improve their vertical jump but it's difficult. It takes dedication. You have to specialize and I'm not sure the outcome is kind of always reflect the effort you put into it. There's a large genetic component to that. So vertical jump turned out not to be a great measure. So I've misunderstood some of my research so...

That's the only really big mistake I made with the athletic skill levels in the first place but looking back over the years realizing like yeah, they're

okay as a series of goals and series of tests but we really need some teaching progressions for people to work with. We need that tool. So going back, rethinking about the movements, like I said there's 26 movements that I use now and cooking those into a more thought out progression in each of these areas.

And it's been pretty fascinating going back through the original levels and seeing if I can modify them to my new way of thinking without having to just throw the whole thing in the trash and start over. And interestingly, that worked fine. I was able to modify without destroying which is good. But especially since the name of our business is Level 4 it was kind of...

Robb: We need five levels now.

Dave: No, I was stuck with four and it turns out yeah, maybe a little bit of semantic wiggling there but that idea can work fine. But along the way, Robb tickled me for some help with providing some ongoing online programming and putting this out to folks as kind of formal offering. And that one thing lead to another and I've got a little team that's been working on putting together this website moveskill.com and that's exactly what we're going to offer now. Daily programming divided into three different ability groupings based on relating to the athletic skill levels, pre-Level 1, Level 1 and Level 2.

So in this range we cover folks that they are healthy but they're essentially not athletic in any sense of the work. They can't do anything you think of as being athletic. They're healthy. They get up. They walk around. They're not on their way to the hospital and that's about all you could say in terms of their physical ability. All the way up from that starting point up to folks and including folks who are good general athletes. They may not have any particular specialty but they can pull and push and run and throw and jump and do some work. They're pretty strong in their upper body. Their shoulders are stable. Their core is stable. Their hips work just fine. The range of motion is well developed. So that would be Level 2.

**[0:40:07]**

So I repackaged those pre-Level 1, Level 1, level 2 as the Move Skill levels and called them beginner, intermediate and advanced. And again, only advance in the sense of general athletic ability, just general fitness. This



doesn't mean there are advanced standup paddle boarders or skiers or any such thing. But again, with this foundation of all around ability, people should be able to dive into pretty much any other pursuit they want and they'll be off to a good start.

And using this Move Skill levels as a tool to divide people into groups and then provide programming based on what's appropriate for each group, the kind of work you throw at people who can do 10, 12, 15 pull-ups in a set is very different in the kind of work you throw at people who have struggled to hang on a bar at all for instance.

Robb: Right.

Dave: They both need work. They both need strength training. They both need some metabolic conditioning. But what you can do to them is very different and the folks especially, both groups will benefit a lot if we can – what the beginners need is – well first of all the strength training and the metabolic conditioning start looking a whole lot the same. If somebody's struggling to do a few push-ups, we modify push-ups so that they can do 8 or 10 repetitions at say maybe a 45 degree angle push-up variation.

And they do a few sets of that and they're winded because their body has been so relatively weak that they haven't been able to do a whole lot of work. And it doesn't take very long to sort of break down the barrier there between strength training and metabolic conditioning and just working out it all kind of looks the same. Where with more advanced folks you can target these different areas more explicitly and they need that. They need that, just doing say a callisthenic based workout all the time which is what we did in the military.

It works up to a point and then that stops working. It's no longer the best way to do it. We need either by position and leverage so for instance maybe somebody with really weak shoulders might have to start off with some lightweight dumbbell pressing and that can graduate to barbell pressing and get heavier. And meanwhile they're learning to put some of their body weight on their hands and eventually maybe get up with their feet braced on a wall so they're maybe in an inverted pike on their hands, partial handstand, from their developing to a handstand eventually developing to the point where they can do a handstand push-up.

Meanwhile, doing some fairly reasonably heavy military presses part of a workout becomes completely doable. That's when somebody's strong enough to do some handstand push-ups, we have many more options what we can do to their shoulders in a workout. So both groups need some exposure to movements that are so hard for them they can only do a few repetitions and they also need exposure to movements that are easy enough they can do more repetitions and develop stamina and just get some work done.

So that we're better served if we can break these workouts into categories and that moveskill.com that's exactly what we've done. Given people guidelines for what constitutes a beginner, what constitutes intermediate, what constitutes advanced, provided some tests that will allow you to tell when you exactly stop being a beginner and start being intermediate for instance and then to graduate from intermediate to advanced. And then to graduate out of advanced and know that okay, now I have a really solid foundation in general fitness.

So we've provided tests, incremental goals and programming key to these things and this website, this offering, we want to make a really concerted effort to teach good principles, teach good movement, which is I resisted for years because I didn't understand how I would do a good job with this over the internet. But what we've done is illustrate every single movement they were asking people to do with video. And demonstrate a short little demo video.

**[0:45:00]**

So folks looking at a workout that calls for dead lift, there's a link, they can take a quick 5-8 second look at what a good dead lift looks like. There's also links to longer instructional videos if they need help either troubleshooting or understanding why things are done a certain way. We've got longer instructional videos. So we really put a lot of effort in it and that's just going to continue as time goes on we are going to illustrate and explain everything we're asking folks to do and put it all under this context of building general fitness.

Robb:

I've gotten to look at the website. It's a gorgeous website and it's a massive amount of work like it's kind of one thing when Dave and I first started talking about this kind of like okay, this doesn't seem too bad.

And then when you really start thinking about the nuance and the intricacies, it becomes an absolutely monumental chunk of work to...

Dave:

Hundreds of demonstration videos and at this point dozens of instructional videos and many more to come as time goes on of course but I'm excited because we've put together a really good program here. This is based on over 10 years of experience in a gym setting and working with thousands of people now and seeing really what works and where do people get hung up and what we find and I know you've seen this too Robb.

Everybody's individual. There's all kinds of unique variations but problems fall into some categories. There's some just general categories of many if not most people have variations at least or it's often same that many problems are exactly the same. Lots of people have a shoulder impingement or anterior shoulder pain that pops up and bugs them from time to time. Those people in my experience almost never know how to stabilize their scapula when they're moving. Their scapula moves around. Their shoulder blades move around while they're doing push-ups and dips and pull-ups and they don't know. They don't feel it. They've never been trained to think this way.

By using some tools from gymnastics and some really good coaches, Edo Portal and Chris Summers and some other resources there, we've learned a lot about straight arm shoulder strengthening and using that as one of the tools to just build stability and strengthen the upper body.

And then going back and adding the more traditional pressing and pulling and those kinds of movements as part of the progression but no longer the only part of the progression is what I'm trying to spit out there. And what we've seen is dramatic progress and a whole bunch of people with shoulder problems in our clinical and our gym practice. So experience it like that has helped us to define these big problem areas kind of universal problem areas if you will and cook that thinking into our programming for Move Skill. So what we're putting out I've got a lot of confidence. It's good set of tools and a really useful effective approach.

Robb:

Again I still think that Dave kind of under values his original contribution to this story with the original skill standards and there is some truth of the fact that when that stuff first came out, it wasn't immediately

obvious what do you do to progress somebody from zero push-ups to a push-up. It wasn't implicitly stated well a place to start as a straight arm scap protracted support, shoulders packed against a counter or against a bar and a power rack.

And that took a little fiddling on my own and because of a little bit of a power lifting background and a little bit of gymnastics background I started thinking about that. But even without that addition, it was huge for us. Just this idea of progression breaking some things apart like maybe tackling the dip if you have zero push-ups, maybe not a great idea. It's like people particularly on the internet web still gnashed teeth and there will be all kinds of drama about that but the people are actually being practitioners and doing the stuff, I think that they see these kind of commonalities pop up. But now what you've done is just phenomenal. Like I really think it's something to be...

**[0:50:05]**

Dave: Thanks for the props.

Robb: Very proud of. I went to Dave's Move Skill class this morning and he said well you know, I want to do some more advanced stuff. We have some people broken, this was a pretty good crew, not a particularly high level. But even for me like I feel like I've got a pretty good movement background. I've got good mobility, good strength, all that stuff. It was very, very challenging and very appropriate for what I need to be doing and my main focus now is trying to do some Brazilian jujitsu and remain healthy and strong and competitive in that as I can.

And the type of activity that I did today, we did a generalized warm up and then started using the movements both as mobility and strength and stretching which is kind of the way that you do everything in real life anyway. So instead of separating all that out, that's the interesting part of this too is these processes are constantly deconstructed and reconstructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. And folks desperately want a one size fits all yes-no binary answer and it's impossible to give that.

But what is possible is to create this huge movement database, have some sort of a logical flow which is what Dave and his crew provides in

this, and then you're able to really find your way through this process. So I'm really excited to get folks checking this out. Its moveskill.com right?

Dave: Moveskill.com. Like I said, it should be up. we're going – our web developers are hard at work putting finishing touches on this and we're going to start rolling a beta version of this in just a couple of I think two weeks I want to say.

Robb: Okay.

Dave: And it's going to be up and rolling here shortly. There's a Japanese word I think comes from manufacturing for continuous improvement.

Robb: I don't know. I know what you're talking about.

Dave: I want to say a word here but [Cross-talk] I want to say a word but I think it's the word from that recent Guillermo Del Toro monster movie kaiju, the monsters from the deep. That's the wrong word. I'm thinking of the wrong word here. But continuous improvement in our coaching practice as well as athletes that we're working – both myself and everybody I know who's ever worked out finds a system if you will whether it's a weightlifting routine or maybe back in the day a universal machine circuit or a loop that you run through the neighborhood or around the lake, you find your routine, you get a little bit of initial success with what you're doing, maybe you're running faster or developing some strength or maybe learning a new trick or two and then we stick with that process.

And later when we run into trouble maybe we're no longer making progress or maybe something starts to hurt or maybe the thing is just boring and feels kind of oppressive to have to actually get up and head out the door and do that run around the lake again. But we stick with the process because that's what we know. And what we need to be doing is sort of constantly evaluating what is this goal that we're working toward and what are the methods we're using to get to that goal and how are they working and take that feedback loop evaluating what our results are and are they moving us towards the goal and reengineering or re jiggering our method.

It's a hassle to do all that stuff. Right? That's our job. It's what we do for a living. It's what we're completely geeked out about. But I think everybody needs some exposure to some kind of at least a little buy-in on that

process because our lives are so complicated you just can't keep doing the same thing.

Robb: I think Kelly Starrett makes this observation everybody needs a coach whether it's a business coach or a movement coach or the area that you want to focus on its handy to have a coach. You can always get in and try to cook this stuff up and figure it out on your own which Dave actually is remarkably good at going deep on figuring stuff out on his own.

**[0:55:00]**

Dave: Even I find that my clients and my trainers, my coaches at the gym, that's not uncommon for one of them to ask me a question like your shoulders are moving this way, is that what you meant? I just got my nose rubbed in a little glitch is what happened. It's like I have to say no, that's you saw me doing something that I wasn't aware of. So having an abstract knowledge of this stuff is one thing and own movements is another thing too. We all need coaches, no question about that. Even in our own – maybe perhaps especially in our own areas of specialty. Yeah?

Robb: Yeah.

Dave: If we're trying to be really honest about the results we're getting and actually trying to keep improving the process...

Robb: So Dave the podcast is going to go up before Move Skill officially launches or any potentiality of having a landing page maybe where folks can drop you an email so that they can be alerted when this thing goes live?

Dave: You know, I'm not prepared for the question. I don't know.

Robb: We'll try. We'll see about that.

Dave: Yeah, I'll definitely talk to my web developer and find out if we can do that.

Robb: And short of that, here's one thing that folks can absolutely do. You can go to the robbwolf.com contact page and send in an email and just in the subject line just put in Move Skill. And then that way anybody that's interested in this, we're going to be talking about this more. You'll see moveskill.com highlighted on robbwolf.com but if you want to be on kind of on the beta test of the early adapter seen with this which I highly,

highly recommend. If Seattle's weather didn't absolutely sucked balls, I would move back up here and Dave would coach me every day and I would be...

Dave: It'd be fun to have you up here Robb.

Robb: Which would be great and we may consider doing something like July through September up here at some point since Front Desk is essentially located up here. But highly recommend that. So we'll see if we can light a fire under Dave's web folks to get a landing page with a drop your email in here. If you don't see that, I'll put a link to robbwolf.com and just a reminder to put in to the subject line so that squachy can triage his stuff and then when Move Skill goes live, we'll be able to pin you an email and let you know hey, it's live. Check this out. It's ready to roll.

Dave: Thanks for the back in support there. I will definitely get my crew taking a look at that at least today.

Robb: Cool.

Dave: And now I feel just kind of dumb that I hadn't thought of that before but one step at a time.

Robb: Details, details.

Dave: One step at a time on that.

Robb: Yeah. Well cool, I'm super stoked that it's always a ton of fun to come to Seattle. I always learn a ton and hoard it and bring it back home and play with it. Dave's been on the show before if you didn't catch that episode. I want to say it was like maybe the 150 range 145 range that we had Dave on the original show.

Dave: Just about a year ago, I know that.

Robb: Yeah. So check that one out. we talked about this stuff also but talked about a little bit about Dave's background and being in the Seal previously and being pretty injured in using a lot of this crossfit stuff and smart progression to rehab some of his injuries. So that's worth checking out. Anything else that we missed that you can think of that we need to cover?

Dave:

There's about a zillion things floating around in my heard here but as far as movement goes, the answers to folks questions always end up being kind of complicated so this website is an answer to that. The other side of this, the whole deal of course and your listeners will already know this. This is why they're at your site I presume but diet places an enormous role in all of this stuff. That's something that we just see constantly as folks doing even smart training and just getting stymied on their progress because they're eating is out of whack or they'll have an issue.

I'm constantly asking – folks will ask me why am I keep having this recurrent pain on the shoulder, knee, elbow, hip, back, neck, chest, wherever, anywhere around the body, foot. And for any of this itus kind of deal, tendonitis or bursitis or any kind of chronic inflammation, I will pester folks to go gluten free, diary free, paleo, give that a shot and really push the gluten free in particular.

I don't have the technical background to explain why this matters so much but what I do know is in our practice, folks that have complained about chronic issues and they give at least the gluten free a god honest 6-8 week try have a ridiculously high improvement rate like way over 50% of people have really dramatic improvements in not just the chronic pain but shedding some excess weight and their performance goes up and they sleep better and they feel better through the day so just quality of life gets better. And that's just as a pure...

**[1:00:11]**

Robb:

Just low hanging fruit kind of deal.

Dave:

Yeah. Just totally non-scientific completely unsupported by anything except our own ongoing recurring just over and over again experience. We just see that, so I'm forever pointing people at your book and your website because this stuff works, it's dramatically effective. And really what we're saying here and part of why – actually our wives hate it when we start talking because they have to just leave the room because we're down a rabbit hole then. But this stuff works together so well.

The smart training combined with the not making too terrible mistakes with your eating and it's transformational stuff so that would only my – and that's how I plan going forward with our both gym practice and this providing programming on the web is to point people at paleo and good



resources there and as a jumping off point for exploring their diet, what I again, just know from experience the diet element is a huge part of success here.

Robb: Right.

Dave: Cannot be overstated. So that would be the only other thing that jumps to mind right now. Other than that, we're just nose on the grind stone of trying to get this stuff out.

Robb: Fantastic. Cool Dave. It was great doing the show with you. If the sound quality was better, that's because Dave has actually invested significant time and infrastructure into a legit recording scenario and we're sitting in the same room together.

Dave: We'll see if we can get some regular podcast up on our end as well.

Robb: Yeah.

Dave: To help get information out on different questions so if folks have questions, we'll have a contact form on our website and we'll start answering questions on our end as well.

Robb: Awesome.

Dave: Podcast, videocast stuff.

Robb: Thanks Dave. And we'll get you – once the website launches, maybe we'll go 2 or 3 months and then swing it back on and then do some re-exploration on this stuff.

Dave: Awesome. And then there will be a lot of material on the web for folks to take a look themselves. There's an enormous back end of knowledge that we're getting ready to push out there and put out for people to use.

Robb: Very cool. Well, good job on doing that.

Dave: Thanks for having me on Robb. I appreciate it always.

Robb: My pleasure. We'll talk to you soon.

Dave: Alright.

**[1:03:17] End of Audio**

