

Paleo Solution - 225

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Robb Wolf: Howdy folks. Robb Wolf here with a very special edition of the Paleo Solution podcast. Today we have author of the Four-Hour Workweek, the Four-Hour Body, the Four-Hour Shift, Charlie Winklestein or no, no, no. It's Tim Ferris, Tim Ferris. Tim how are you doing?

Tim Ferris: I'm doing great man. It's nice to jump on horn with you again.

Robb Wolf: Great to connect with you. It's been a little while. What's new? What do you have cooking?

Tim Ferris: Well there are a few things that I have cooking. Since we last spoke I had actually had the opportunity which was tremendously exciting for me to do a little bit of effectively interning or volunteering at the Sandler Neuroscience lab at UCSF which is home to Adam Gazeli and his team who do and continue to do a lot of work in TDCS, so transcranial direct current stimulation. They're also looking at alternate forms. But they ended up on the cover of I think it was Nature Magazine which is something like winning the best actor, best supporting actor, best director simultaneously in the Oscars.

Robb Wolf: [Indiscernible]

Tim Ferris: Right.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: But within the science world that is as big as it gets. I was both a subject where I was having these sort of anode and cathode put on my scalp to see how they affected performance in a video game specifically a racing video game and multitasking game. I also had the chance to be one of the experimenters so we're going through the methodology, the experimental design and hooking subjects up and capturing data. So it's really interesting for me for the first time to this kind of step behind the curtain and see how really formal practical clinical studies are conducted. So that was a really fun experience for me.

For those people who aren't familiar with TDCS, you know, there's some claims out there and there are a number of consumers devices that I'm somewhat wary of. But there are some speculation that you could

hypothetically improve say first person shooter game accuracy by 70%, 80% under some circumstances where you take people who are mediocre and make them into super snipers basically. So the stories that have been written about this have sparked a lot of academic and practical interest in how do you use these devices which are really powered by effectively a nine volt battery to improve mental performance. So that's one thing.

The other thing that's been taking up a good amount of my time is trying to become a better interviewer and to bring people on to the Tim Ferris show. I've tried –it was going to be the Tim Ferris experiment or experience but they all sounded like other podcasts that renounced the very egotistical and narcissistic the Tim Ferris show. But this podcast has been a lot of fun and it's ended up doing you know, really well on iTunes. It was number one for about a week and a half across all of the categories of trying to become a better interviewer and to figure out all right if I don't have a month to interview this person for a book, how do you pull gems out of people if they're –especially if they're resistant over the span of saying hour to an hour and a half. There are real wizards at this obviously. You know, the Larry Kings of the world, the Charlie Roses and certainly many others who are lesser known. So I'm just trying to make a study of that.

Robb Wolf: So what have you done in that? Because I feel like I do a reasonably good job although I operate within a fairly narrow lane lines. Like it tends to be kind of you know, medical, health related sciency type topics occasionally something a little bit politics oriented or something. But I tend to work within pretty tight boundaries and usually topics that I'm fairly well steeped in. So what have you done as far as trying to you know, get a Pareto law kind of way to break down the interview with someone that you're almost showing up flat footed to --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: --you know, interview them?

Tim Ferris: Definitely and there are some cases where I don't know the person I'm interviewing. This is a new experience for me. I've never really interviewed someone who has not come through a warm introduction.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris: So how do you for instance –this is a very new experience for me. How do you switch seats with an interview in so much as typically I'm the person

who's going on to whatever it might be that The Today Show, I'm like oh my god, I've a three minute segment. I'll probably only be able to get a word in edge wise for 20 seconds. What am I going to say and how do I get my message across and whatever it might be that I happen to be that I happen to want to promote like a book or whatever.

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So now the roles are reversed and I'm trying to figure out you know, how do I create a really compelling interview without having it sound like a sales pitch from the other side if they're concerned about making their mark with getting the message across. That you know, this is my new fill in the blank. So I'd say the Pareto analysis that I've been doing is very similar to the way that I approach it with all these other subjects whether it's language, learning or trying to figure out the deadlift or whatever. First is just gathering interesting data points and for me that's been listening to really good podcasts. You know, I've listened to your podcast, I've listened to this American life, I've listened to even formats that you wouldn't think provide good questions like hard core history which is effectively a monologue.

Robb Wolf: Yeah that Dan Carlin is amazing.

Tim Ferris: But --

Robb Wolf: --is amazing.

Tim Ferris: --he's incredible and he'll ask questions of the audience. He'll say imagine if you will... what would it have been like in this Spanish-American war had they blah, blah, blah. You know, question mark. I'm like okay, I see what he's doing here. He's directing the thought in the audience by asking questions even though they're either rhetorical or he's going to provide the answer. And--

Robb Wolf: But then it's not just a wall of information. Like it's actually engaging you and pulling you in. He's phenomenal with that.

Tim Ferris: Oh exactly so I've been studying people who are really good at this and collecting questions. So journalists have been talking and my friends were journalists like how do you when someone is assigned to be interviewed by you for Rolling Stone Magazine and they do not want to talk to you, right. I mean and there are some cases with musicians for instance where they just hate media. They do not want to talk to you. How do you crack that open? How do you lead them? What questions do you ask such as you know, who do you depend on to tell you when you're wrong you

know, is one of those questions. It's actually a question that caused Bob Dylan to walk out of an interview at one point.

Robb Wolf:

Wow.

Tim Ferris:

And so studying the crafting of questions. Andrew Warner of Mixergy is also very good at this and has provided me with some guidelines. So it's really in the long list of shit to throw against the wall now let me start experimenting with this, of the podcast. Because I've really done, I've recorded maybe ten to twelve of these episodes and each one is very different. I'm testing different hardware. For instance it might be Skype plus call recorder or it might be a Zoom H4N plus 2 mics via XLR cables. Then the next time it might be a handheld you know, yellow tech mic that has all the component you built in that I'm actually having to hand back and forth with the interviewee. It's just throwing a lot of spaghetti against the wall to see what sticks.

Robb Wolf:

Nice, nice.

Tim Ferris:

Yeah.

Robb Wolf:

So how many of those have rolled out so far?

Tim Ferris:

So far four of them have gone up and four excuse me now five very recently. And the intention of the podcast is as a self-experimenter myself and a human guinea pig is to try to deconstruct world-class performers from various eclectic areas. So you'll have investors right of Kevin Rose is one of the top tech investors in Silicon Valley. Then you have Jess and I have Josh Wadeskin who is the basis for Searching for Bobby Fisher. But he also has been a performance coach to people like Mark Messier, the six-time Stanley Cup champion and he also works with a lot of the top hedge fund managers in the world. So what is he doing? How does he do that?

Of course some of the guys that you know Kelly Starret was on the show with my personal doctor Justin Major. So that was some discussion of PT and mobility and blood testing. It just goes down the line. I mean you have filmmakers and sort of philosopher/writers and I'm trying to make it as eclectic as possible so that people can identify the common traits, the common behaviors, the common rituals, the common beliefs that tie all these people together right? Because I feel and I'd be curious to hear your thoughts on this that the people who are the best at what they do have more in common with the people who are the best in what they do

in totally different disciplines than they do with the people who are even two levels below them in the same discipline if that makes sense.

Robb Wolf:

No totally, totally and it's –funny enough it actually makes me think of a Dan Carlin podcast we're just listening to a couple of days ago with the changing and he was talking about the... in listening to this run-up that he's done this three-part series countdown to Armageddon where he talks about the how World War I occurred and actually the arms race and how important it was for even these smaller countries to be very technologically advanced and to... that they had a lot of convergent evolution in what they were doing even though there was very little information exchange between say like France and Germany and their militaries even they're in close proximity. But that they had very similar approaches to the way that they were able to go from being able to mobilize like a seven-hundred person or seven hundred thousand person army to three or four million person armies. That there was a remarkable amount of synergy in the way that they tackled that even though there were some big cultural differences, different geographical differences and whatnot. But at the end of the day they ended up winnowing out very similar methodology for that same problem.

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Tim Ferris:

Oh definitely. And there's also, you know, there are so many things you noticed right? For instance if you go across almost all of the guys I've interviewed so far and this has come up organically quite a few times. Almost all of them and this is not true of all top performers but almost every single person I've interviewed so far has a regular meditation or mindfulness practice of some type. Whether that is something that pulls them into the present state moment on a scheduled basis, whether that is meditation, vipassana, or transcendental meditation where it's 20 minutes a day or 20 minutes twice a day or whatever or if it's lifting weights let's say and counting cadence. I mean that's another form of mindfulness right where that is your me time when you basically pull out the past and the future and focus on something as meditative as counting cables. Like if the concentric is whatever.

You know, let's just say you're doing something really slow like Hutchins's style so it's like four or five seconds up, four or five seconds down, right and something it could be a ballistic motion that you're counting with a faster template right whether it's Kettlebell swings or something else. So that has been 100% consistent across everyone that I've interviewed so far and that surprised even me right. The obsession with detail right so the people who are like the best arm resolution in the world, the best chess players in the world, the best fill in the blank in the world, there are

these details that might seem minute or trivial to the outsider that are actually really big things, right. Like one of the small things or the big things and I'm sure you could think of examples from your own life but it's like writing is ripe with examples of this where it's like something that I think many people think of as trivial yet I think of obsessively is spacing of lines on a page. I don't mean the actual spacing of every line. I'm not talking about that. But rather how do you break up paragraphs so that you will draw someone from one page to the next to the next.

Like it seems like an aesthetic kind of frivolous thing but it's not. I don't know if you've ever had the experience, you pick up the book that is really well written, that you know you should be into but it's just solid blocks of text.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris: Paragraphs that run through pages and you not only psychologically get so fatigued that you have to put the book down. Right? I love finding these weird seemingly weird obsessions that all these people have in different respects.

Robb Wolf: You know, it makes me think of two things. One is Steve Jobs where he wanted even the circuit boards to look nice even though no one would ever see them. So he was kind of freaked out and geeked out on the aesthetics of some of the backend that nobody would ever see. But then also the – well that's kind of the main thing that popped in my head. But the other thing kind of tangential to that where is the interplay between that Pareto 80/20 kind of story where you get the big picture story? And this is something I've wanted to ask you for a long time but then when do we ogle in and really go for that minutia like with the arm wrestler..

Tim Ferris: Yeah, yeah.

Robb Wolf: With the Marcelo Garcia where they are just spinning out on the mega, mega, mega minutia. They've spent you know, possibly a hundred thousand hours at their chosen endeavor and so --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: -- all of the basics are done. The Pareto stuff is just a memory and all they have left are --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: -- details. Like when does that transition happen or what can we learn from that?

Tim Ferris: No, that's a great question. Just because I'm so fascinated by the example you brought up, why did you mention Marcelo Garcia?

Robb Wolf: Because he's fascinating to me because he does a lot of things that nobody else does in combatives. Like one thing he doesn't have a formalized strength and conditioning program. He only does Brazilian jujitsu.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: I mean one thing his record is just impeccable, like he's almost unstoppable on the mat but he does a lot of things that are very interesting like he doesn't have a formalized strength and conditioning program.

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Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: He doesn't lift weights, he doesn't peripheral conditioning. He just figures out ways of just simply taking Brazilian jujitsu and doing more of it.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: If he needs conditioning, he goes very, very hard, multiple rounds. If he needs to refine technique, then it's a slower aerobic type pace. If he's injured then you know, he changes stuff up and he starts working --you know, like if his left thumb is jammed or something then he basically sticks that hand inside of his gi and he's working his feet in his one good hand and he's lifting stuff with that.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So --

Tim Ferris: Yeah so Marcelo--

Robb Wolf: -- that's really fascinating

Tim Ferris: No. Marcelo is a fascinating guy. The reason I bring him up again is because I've actually spent a lot of time with Marcelo. So I can comment very specifically to Marcelo and you have to -- you definitely just

personally have to listen to episode 2 of the Tim Ferris Show with Josh Wadeskin because Josh is a world class chess player right? He's the basis for Searching for Bobby Fisher.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Tim Ferris: He also co-owns the Marcelo Garcia Jujitsu Academy with Marcelo so --

Robb Wolf: What's the book that he wrote?

Tim Ferris: So he wrote a book called The Art of Learning.

Robb Wolf: That's right. That's right.

Tim Ferris: And Josh is really just the consummate learner and he focuses on the last 1%. So he would view me as someone very good at deconstructing the 80/20 analysis they get into say the top 5% in the world right? That's where I would draw the delineation. I think you can get very, very far with the Pareto's principle as applied to say sports, top 5% in the general population not top 5% in the professional competitive category. The top 5% in the general population including those professionals, you know, just on mass. I think you can do with 80/20 principle. Then you have someone like Josh who really focuses on helping people who are one of the best in the world become the best of the world.

But with Marcelo, I would say that whether or not you want to be the best in the world or something very good at something, the way you start is still the same and that is identifying a handful of core principles that act as your Archimedes lever for making very rapid progress and progress that will not plateau for a long period of time because you chose some type of strategy that becomes obsolete.

Robb Wolf: Like the jujitsu attribute based stuff. You're strong or you're flexible.

Tim Ferris: Right. Right, right, right. So that's the example I was going to bring up which is in Marcelo's case, Marcelo doesn't practice any technique, any submission that he can't use on someone twice his size, okay. So you think about that for a second. You're like okay how would that change your practice of jujitsu or anyone's practice of jujitsu if they couldn't use the panoply of submissions they can use only on people their size maybe slightly stronger. But once you have a guy whose neck and shoulders are the girth of an ox like are you going to use a lot of triangle chokes? Probably not. Can you use a guillotine? Yes, you can. Can you use the

Marcelotine which is sort of Marcelo's crazy variant on the guillotine which is extremely technical?

I spent some time looking at this with him unbelievably technical with a move that is thought of by many people as sort of a muscle move. So you have practicing techniques that you can only those techniques that you can use against someone twice your size and say.

Then secondly Marcelo focuses on something that again many people perhaps omit or don't view as core to their practice. In contrast to say many jujitsu classes where those – here are the five core positions or whatever right? You have mount, you have guard, you have half guard, you have side control etc., etc., etc. and now we're going to look at how to move from one to the next to the next to the next. What Marcelo is so well known for, he's called the king of the scramble and calling it a scramble implies that he's getting lucky and he's not. Marcelo lives in the transitions so he looks to apply pressure, release pressure to create openings in transition that he can capitalize on from a submission standpoint. So you start to view the entire game as the for instance, this is not my quote but it's been said that music is the space between the nose right?

Robb Wolf:

Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris:

So Marcelo's game, his submission game is the space between the positions. When he started viewing jujitsu that way, your entire sort of mental framework for sparring changes. Right? So those will be a few.

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Now to the point of like when do you just ogle down and go for the gold, I think it's when you recognize that beyond just technical training, you have the attributes necessary, right? The god given natures necessary to get to the very top of that field. I think consulting like Brazilian jujitsu, you can get very, very, very, very, very good but to be a Marcelo Garcia there are certain god given talents like a kinesthetic awareness in Marcelo that is second to none. I mean he can pick up any sport with a snap of a finger. It's incredible how kinesthetically gifted he is.

So I think that once you realize say you're in the top 5% and you're using some scalable training so that you're not obsolescing like Marcelo's only using techniques that can be used on someone twice his size. Then you're like okay you know what, I actually have the VO2 max, the hand strength, the endurance, the build, just the physics right? I mean if you look at the say Olympic – if you look at crossfit as a whole and practice of the Olympic lifts and then you look at the silver and gold medalists in weight

classes in Olympic weight lifting in the Olympics, you see a rapid sort of winnowing down of body types right?

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: Same thing with swimming right, if you look at like high school level, college level, you go then a step further like division 1 then to Olympic they very quickly morph into the same body types. Right? So I think you ogle down once you realize that you have a very formidable combination of excellent training technique and strategy plus attributes. So skills plus attributes.

Robb Wolf: I think I just saw something recently, I forget where it was. I think it was a Ted Talk talking about world championship performance and the guy made the point that Michael Phelps and then a guy who has the current world record on the mile they're the same height but there's seven inches difference between them and torso and leg length.

Tim Ferris: Oh wow, that's awesome.

Robb Wolf: You know, and --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So or maybe it was the same leg length like they can wear the same pair of pants but then there's seven inches of difference in height. I forget exactly what the specs were there but it's pretty interesting. Then the guy also pointed out that in the United States in the last year there were 13 people who finished a marathon in two hours, 11 minutes or under and then in Kenya there were 45, 450 people that did that?

Tim Ferris: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: So there's some physiogamy that selected there some physiology and just basically like some things like a super skinny cab, skinny knees, big lungs, all these adaptations which make certain types of people very, very good at covering a lot of ground quickly, you know.

Tim Ferris: Yeah. Oh definitely.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah.

Tim Ferris: I think that there are --there's a genetic input right that determines your max potential but I don't view that as a negative. I also don't view it as

deterministic. It's not 100% certain. So you shouldn't use it as an alibi but rather an excuse to absolve yourself of say physical training. Oh I'm just not athletic and this and that, big boon, whatever like bullshit. You can do a lot even with shitty raw materials and I think that I'm a fairly good example of that. I had horribly mediocre genetics for both endurance and power sports and I've done, you know, core tissue samples, biopsies, enzyme analysis like you look at it and you would come to the conclusion that particularly for endurance, I am worse than Homer Simpson. Like literally you have like sedentary average American and then you have Tim Ferris. It's like below the x axis. I don't even know how that happens but that's horrible, horrible, horrible. Like my citrate synthase and everything is just laughably bad.

Despite that, I've been able to do really explore some of the outer limits of what I'm capable of and lead people to the erroneous conclusion that like oh well you're just good at x. Right? So I think that you can become with just about any body type and fiber type and what not extremely good at many, many, many different sports but to your question like when you go for like the top 1%, all right, now you're getting into mutant territory with anything right? Whether that's music with perfect pitch, whether that is professional sports with different sort of parameters not only for fiber type but like you pointed out you know, proportion.

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But you can do so much. You can do so, so, so much even with the shittiest of dimensions, the shittiest of sort of raw materials to start with.

Robb Wolf:

Fascinating. You know, maybe kind of a lead in with that and also a little homage to one of the pioneers in this self-experimentation story, Seth Roberts you know, he opened so many folks' eyes to this opportunity for doing the N=1 experimentation to looking beyond the randomized control trials and to just kind of see where you know, I would say you know, outcome based medicine, outcome based experimentation kind of goes. What do you think about that? I know you –I only got to meet Seth a couple of times. I know you had a fairly tight relationship with him like not to completely shift gears here but--

Tim Ferris:

No, no, no, no.

Robb Wolf:

- it popped on my head for some reason.

Tim Ferris:

It's very, very closely related to... Seth for those who don't know was a professor emeritus at UC Berkeley. Very well-known self-experimenter where the book called the Shangri-La diet and he and I became quite good friends and actually attended the very first quantified self meet-up

together which was in I think 2008 or 2009 at Kevin Kelly's house. Kevin Kelly was the founding editor of Wired Magazine, a great website, it's a site KK.org has tons of stuff.

I think Seth was able to provide a handful of things that worked reliably that were pulled from his self-experimentation of N=1. What many people I think and don't get me wrong. There's a lot of bad science and extremely poor thought out methodologies that are used by a lot of self-experimenters, but that doesn't mean that all self experimentation is just a shot in the dark and guesswork. So you can have N=1 or N=5 let's say a very small sample size and that doesn't mean that something can't be statistically significant. If the amplitude of the difference between say control and experimental are significant enough right. If the amplitude is significant enough, you don't need as large a sample.

Robb Wolf:

Right, right.

Tim Ferris:

Exactly. Exactly right. So Seth was very good at trying to control for certain variables and to the extent possible, determine causality as opposed to just correlation although correlation that's the beautiful part of N=1 is that if you're trying to figure out how you respond to gluten, how you respond to peanuts, how you respond to different types of training you don't have the luxury or you shouldn't have the luxury of waiting ten years for a study, longitudinal study to potentially come together and be published. Because chances are number 1, this is not going to happen. Number 2, you really want to wait ten years to sort of the opportunity cost is very high. Number 3, quite often the studies themselves even at that scale are so flawed as to not contribute any type of meaningful conclusion. Right? You're not going to get if you do this, then B as the result. It will be kind of hedged and watered down to the point where it will always end with more research is needed.

And you know, with Seth, I mean he had any number of things. I mean some of them are really oddball. Like standing on one leg for hours at a time to help sleep. You know, there's some really crazy stuff that he did that no doubt I most cases worked.

Then there are others that had a tremendous impact on me as well as my readers and very consistently effective. For instance, having hot water with some apple cider vinegar like a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar and a tablespoon of raw honey dissolved in hot water. Having that before bad to help sleep and I've seen people who have tracked their before and after with accelerometers or other type of measurement and it's really

profound. I mean it's just a simple thing and it was able to impact thousands of people by doing a little bit of tracking.

So Seth will be sorely missed. I mean it's really sad that he passed away and it really didn't hit me for a day or two. I mean I got the news the day after it happened and I remember texting with the friend. He told me and I said it's not even hitting me now. I'm sure it will but I don't even have a response at the moment. Then I was pretty fucked up for a couple of days. I mean I was really and even the entire week I was pretty useless. You know, part of the reason was it seemed that one of the and you may have more information at this point than I do so feel free to correct me but one of the potential explanations for his death which appeared to be brain hemorrhage or an aneurysm of some type while he was hiking in Berkeley, was that he screwed you the decimal point placement on this flax seed consumption.

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I'm not sure if you've seen this anecdotally or otherwise but it seems that over consumption of say fish oil or flax seed oil can cause intestinal bleeding or stomach bleeding. I don't know the exact mechanism is but if you are looking at some type of whether it's blood pressure or actual like epithelial some type of sort of capillary vulnerability that that creates it appeared that he was consuming just like 10 to 20 times sort of the max tolerant does of flax seed oil per day.

I feel I have a lot of conflict like internal conflict about the end of his story at least as a living human being having that type of punctuation mark. It's just it's really an unfortunate and to a guy who really contributed a lot to many, many people.

Robb Wolf: Yeah I haven't followed any of that material. I had heard of some vascular occlusion, some cardiomegaly and I heard a little bit about the potential kind of decimal point issues there but I had not followed it. I just know for myself you know, being very early in this kind of ancestral health scene and the whole paleo diet stick and whatnot. It was a long dark, tea time of the soul where there weren't very many academics that gave us much of a fair shake.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Seth was really one of these first people that got in and sniffed around this and he saw what we had largely been doing which was kind of the N=1 experiment of here are some proposed mechanisms whether it's gut permeability or sleep alterations, photo period or whatever. Here are some things that we think might happen if you modify things in this

direction, please give us your results. He really jumped in with that with both feet. He was good friend with Daren Glasdale who's a professor down at UCLA. Seth was really one of the huge validating elements to the early ancestral health kind of paleo diet scene and really defended us in a lot of ways saying you know, okay we don't have a bunch of randomized controlled trials on this but this isn't purely observational. This isn't purely anecdotal. When you're getting changes as consistently as what these folks are reporting, then at the minimum they should be a place to start writing some case reports and make an argument for clinical trials. Now 10, 11 years later, we actually – I think right now there are eight or twelve randomized control trials with you know, the term paleo diet in the write-up. You know, from cardiovascular disease to auto immunity to gastrointestinal issues. I really feel like Seth was a huge you know, crystallizing point in that actually getting some academic chops and some people looking at us a little bit more closely than just like okay this is another fad.

Tim Ferris: Oh definitely and I think that one of the ways in which he helped is that he was an outsider looking in on the paleo community if that makes sense. So it didn't come off as his – I wouldn't say endorsement but rather it's an intellectual curiosity spurred by the data was not due to his involvement in a certain workout culture or living in a certain place and being surrounded by people who followed this diet. It was purely based on his observation that the data were interesting.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: And that the outcomes were interesting and I think that his academic qualifications and the fact that he was sort of outside the flock of converts initially was very helpful you know, for convincing people who would otherwise not give paleo and related diets a second look.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. Yeah. So again I didn't know Seth nearly as well as you did. I only got to meet him two or three times, had dinner with him once but just a really phenomenal person. So very, very sad thing. I feel for the people who knew him a lot better than I did for everybody really.

Tim Ferris: Yeah he was a good guy and looking at the silver lining, he did in fact so many thousands of people prior to this passing that he helped to start a movement that whether viewed it as qualified self or self-experimentation or self-tracking. He helped really popularize a set of tools that will and obviously far outlive him personally.

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Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: Which I think is a tremendous legacy. So kudos to him.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. You know, Tim on the kind of quantified self-front I have had kind of a love hate relationship or thought process with the whole thing. I've had clients have people that I've worked with that will go so far down the rabbit hole on tracking so many different metrics that you know, for me I'm kind of like well I don't know if any or what of this I would change their programming, their sleep, their food, etc. You know, how have you boiled that stuff down? Like what are some go-to? You know I kind of feel like tracking some sleep, some thought towards tracking physical activity and you know, pedometers and stuff are not perfect but that's a good starting place. Like what's the weak from the chafe as far as that goes on quantified self? Like what do you use or what do you feel like people actually get some benefit from versus just completely ogering into a mountain side with data that doesn't really tell them where to go or what to do next?

Tim Ferris: Yeah. I think that the quantified self and the informed self are two different things.

Robb Wolf: Right. Nice distinction, yeah, yeah.

Tim Ferris: So I'm asked all the time like what are the six things that you're tracking now, what are the ten things that you're tracking now? Most of the time my answer is nothing which is very disappointing typically to the people asking. That is because I'm very objective driven. I want to improve my running time. I want to improve my stroke count in swimming. I want to improve my language retention as measured in a number of different ways whatever it might be and then I try to make a list of the variables that I foresee as affecting that. And then I will tweak one or at most two of those at a time so that I can hopefully keep things separate.

I think that quantified self fails more often for the same reason that books fail or instruction teaching in general and that is too much information not too little information. So there are people who just don't have –I mean they look like robo cop. They have like 17 different devices strapped in them and they're compulsive data gatherers. But I'm utterly unconvinced that they create any kind of meaningful training program or set of changes based on that data. It's more of a curious collect – it's more of a curiosity that leads to a collection of data and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that, nothing you can split the queuesers kind of into two groups roughly and that is you know, the people who

collect data to satisfy the curiosity of quantifying the unknown, right, whatever that might be, it doesn't matter. It could be menstrual cycles, it could be awake times, it could be percentage of deep sleep. They're just curious to see the data. There's nothing wrong with that.

I am just compulsively outcome driven so my approach is very, very different and for the like average Joe or Jane, I'd say step number 1 for me and I'd love to get your opinion on this but like step 1 is do comprehensive blood testing at least once a quarter. That is just my like absolute bare minimum. You do not want a single annual snapshot of a point in time measurement of all of your blood markers. It's just irresponsible. If you want to do any type of meaningful trending, if you want to try to remove some inkling of testing error and I hate to say it but it's like all these labs that do blood analysis occasionally have issues. Like everyone will come back as positive for egg white allergies or whatever that you know.

If you're only doing it once a year and your doctor says holy shit your testosterone is 200 points lower than it was last year, we need to get you on androgel well that doctor may not realize that the last time you did a test it was on a Wednesday morning while you're fasting and the second time you did a test it was on a --you know, Friday after heavy drinking the night before. By the way like you tested your testosterone the second time at 10:30 as opposed to 8:00 a.m. As you know that makes a huge difference. I mean you have --

Robb Wolf: It's actually a great recipe for getting somebody on androgel. [Laughs]

Tim Ferris: No that's what I'm --

Robb Wolf: Stay up all night and drink, yeah.

Tim Ferris: Well that's what I'm saying and also just the difference in timing. Like I've done a lot of --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: --testosterone testing myself where you can have fluctuations and very, very easily have fluctuations of 100 points or more just over the span of the first half of the day based on just diurnal ups and downs of the sort of hormonal rhythm of things. Just like growth hormone isn't released in a steady stream. I mean it's released in spurts.

[0:40:11]

So I would say number one, is comprehensive blood testing. I use wellness FX. I wasn't an advisor. They got acquired by Thorn. I still use Wellness FX and get the Cadillac treatment. Secondly I would say is I do think sleep, the sleep and pedometer examples aren't bad examples because they're very tangible. The pedometer is effective in modifying behavior because it is so easy to affect if that makes sense.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris: The sleep gets a little dicier which is why I like to use it in conjunction with something like blood testing. But I would say sleep is pretty cool. There's a device, there's a new device out called the shine which is through a company called Misfit. It's really the most aesthetically appealing of the accelerometers that I've seen which my friends, a number of my close friends use for sleep tracking. Not ideal but since Zeo was going out of business it's been hard for me to find a replacement that really directly looks at brainwave activity without giving you a horrible migraine --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: Because it feels like someone tied a lanyard around your head.

Robb Wolf: Details.

Tim Ferris: Yeah, details right like don't give your customers migraines. I think those are good to start with but the one that is almost universally neglected that is just the number one place for me is comprehensive blood testing.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Have you played around much with HRV?

Tim Ferris: You know, I have actually. I have played around with the heart rate variability stuff. A friend of mine is a physicist, originally an optics guy who came out of -- where he worked on not a hadrom collider but some -- Livermore Labs that's where it was and Louie. Louie is a genius. He occasionally sends me crazy devices to test. [Laughs] He's also the guy one of the core guys behind the intellimetrics and body metrics infrared body fat scanners.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Tim Ferris: Which are handheld plug into your USB port of your computer which is what I use for body fat testing. He sent me a heart rate variability device that you would stick to your chest in the morning and I captured a lot of

HRV data for a period of time. Then I sent it back to him and he and this Italian team who are working on it for cyclists ran the analysis. I wasn't able personally to get a lot of actionable data from the HRV. I mean I actually love to hear your thoughts. It seemed to be the type of thing that would be far more useful if you are a high volume athlete. So if you're training in the equivalent of say a Tour de France team, and you're just putting insane stresses on the body and try to determine you know, if you need to consume an extra 2000 calories a day or if you need another hour of sleep or if you should go out and do that six-hour ride that day or whatever it might be. I think it would be, it seemed to be more actionable than it was for me and I'm primarily sedentary by that standard certainly. You know what I mean? I work out, I exercise, I go for long walks, I do my pushups you know,--

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Tim Ferris: Go to the gym if I'm feeling really ambitious but I am certainly a lazy slob compared to professional cyclists. So what has been your experience with HRV? I mean how are you using it or not using it?

Robb Wolf: You know, it's interesting Joel Jameson, he's trained a lot of UFC fighters. So again to your point it definitely seemed to get a lot of the best fit for using something like HRV with people who are really kind of on the margins of physical performance. But I've seen actually some pretty good benefit for police, fire fighters people on the shift work, you know, just particularly in say like crossfit gym type settings where these people aren't necessarily like trying to set the world on fire with their, you know, with their athletic prowess. But because of their lifestyle, because of extenuating circumstances, they need some sort of an outside input, a very objective input to say you know, you don't really need that white buffalo in the sky workout today. Like you could push a prowler, do some foam rolling and then we'll light it up a little bit because you're going to have three days where you're going to get some real sleep instead of having come off of a 48-hour shift as a fire fighter and you went on 35 calls over that period of time.

[0:45:06]

So I had seen huge benefit with that and it has been interesting too the HRV is pretty powerful to me and that it just tracks stress in general. So we don't know if it's a gluten dose, if it's too many bad carbs, if it's inadequate sleep but you know, the person will be motoring along. The way that Joel's program is set up you get a green, you get a yellow and you get a red and so just those changes really provide some feedback and it's been really fascinating. I've talked to some people who actually use anabolics quite a bit who use the HRV --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: -- and interestingly when they first go on the anabolics they will flag as being yellow or red because it so dramatically changes their resting pattern.

Tim Ferris: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: But the HRV software actually flags that as an abnormal stressor when actually these people are kind of hyper ready for training. So you know, there's -- you definitely need some coaching eye on that stuff to be able to make sense of it but it --

Tim Ferris: What hardware are you using for that?

Robb Wolf: You know, I'd have to grab it. It's stuff that Joel has put together. You know, it's all one stop shop strapped across the chest, run at the morning and it connects wirelessly to your smart phone.

Tim Ferris: Interesting.

Robb Wolf: And it seems to do a really good job. But that's one of the things that I have found pretty helpful. I know that the seal teams have used these things pretty extensively and they did some correlations with peptide Y and readiness for like going through this keel houses and HRV. So they did a lot of correlations looking at HRV and kind of some different neuropeptides. In seals in believe ti's peptide Y. They tend -- most seals tend to have like six or seven hundred percent more peptide Y than most people. So there seems to be some sort of stress adaptation in these folks that are being selected for the processes that they go through like buds and all the rest of their training. But then with about a 98, 99% success level.

They'll look at the HRV before the guys go through a keel house and they'll be able to say okay Charlie is going to fuck up today whereas all the rest of these guys are going to be fine.

Tim Ferris: Interesting.

Robb Wolf: Based off of HRV. So they're able to get some you know, I mean it's not telling you exactly what is off, what the problem was but you for whatever reason, today because of the accumulated stress or the accumulated impact on that individual things are just not going to be

firing in such a way that they're going to have the most, you know, the greatest likelihood of success.

Tim Ferris: Right and now that makes sense. I mean I would use – so HRV the challenge for me was I had data but not information. Right? So I had exportable data that went into an Excel spreadsheet for mathematicians to crunch and this was quite a while ago. Right? So I was missing the consumer friendly version of this.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Tim Ferris: So I'll have to check that out. Joel --

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Tim Ferris: -- what was Joel's last name again?

Robb Wolf: Jameson. I'll do an intro.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Intro after.

Tim Ferris: Yeah, yeah that would be great. I would be really interested in that. I could see using that, I could see using it if I had an indigestible, go, no-go type of format.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Tim Ferris: A quick question on what you just said, White buffalo in the sky workout, is that the crossfit , is that a like standard crossfit term?

Robb Wolf: I think that was something from Dances with Wolves.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: You know, it's basically seeing god.

Tim Ferris: Natunka, natunka. Yeah, yeah right.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. [Laughs] So that's been my description of some of these workouts that these guys do where it's like yeah you're you know, paleoty or a brick against the head or that workout are all going to have very similar effects so yeah.

Tim Ferris: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Like the likelihood of coming back alive or at least not completely unchanged is unlikely so yeah.

Tim Ferris: Is unlikely got it, yeah. So you could do, you could make all sorts of different –you know, your references that are similar to that. You can do a like the fight club boxer under eth eyes. I don't know if you remember, -
-

Robb Wolf: Right, right. Yeah.

Tim Ferris: The boxer under the ice workout.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Tim Ferris: That's white buffalo in the sky has a more majestic ring to it though.

Robb Wolf: It kind of does yeah.

Tim Ferris: Yeah. [Laughs] So what else besides the HRV are you finding most actionable in terms of sort of quantified data for athletes?

Robb Wolf: You know, really the sleep piece again and again and again it seems like if people are getting adequate and good sleep then you know, they're very hard to break. If they're not getting that then it's almost impossible to keep all the wheels on their wagon and it's... You know, it's interesting when you mentioned the baseline blood work I would maybe throw in that that in addition to that a four-point ASI test which end up overlapping a lot of what you find in the basic blood work but you're looking at DHEA, sulfate, cortisol, testosterone, estrogen, estradiol.

[0:50:01]

Because it's a four point analysis you're getting a little bit of a picture of where is the trend throughout the day. So yeah some people --

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: --who may wake up and they're just lethargic and dragging and then they tend to perk up later in the day which may kind of indicate like a flipped circadian rhythm which really isn't the best thing in the world.

Tim Ferris: Yeah the tired and wired --

Robb Wolf: The tired and wired deal yeah. Yeah.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So monitoring sleep, monitoring the HRV just so that you've got basic idea of okay we had a planned two-day off here. You're amber today but we're going to go ahead and do a hard workout because we've got several days off and we're going to go get a massage and do some sauna and stuff like that. So we'll have some good recovery and then taking care of sleep and those seemed to be the biggies that are just consistent massive return on investment. It almost goes beyond return on investment. It's almost like you just can't even sit down at the table without getting the – especially the sleep piece pretty squared away. Like it will just wear people down to a nub rather quickly if that piece isn't dealt with. You know, people will be – you will see folks that have varying degrees of resiliency and I think there are again a lot of different professions maybe similar again going back to some of the selection processes. You can become an Olympic caliber swimmer like the people will become surgeons and top of the food chain physicians, people who are successful in special operations communities, I think there's a lot of genetics and epigenetic selection that goes on that those people just last longer from that type of abuse. And then the rest of humanity just –you know, everybody is going to blow up at some point but those people blow up at a much later stage than most of the rest of us do.

Tim Ferris: Oh for sure, yeah. There is a huge selection bias. I mean one thing that I've noticed I don't know what your experience has been but that – so and this may just be pure coincidence but I've met quite a few kind of spec ops guy as the navy seals and whatnot and the guys who get selected for those units, I've yet to meet one who displays some symptoms of PTSD.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris: Whereas the general kind of infantry men you know, marines, army folks whatever the, however the selection process differs, the guys who are at the highest level in the elite units just do not – they seem to have a psychological and emotional resilience that is hard to find almost anywhere else. It's very similar with the top hedge fund guys have actually.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

Tim Ferris: Because the top hedge fund if you think about the similarity of between the two groups what are a lot of these guys doing? They're thinking about the absolute worst case scenarios all the time. For most people that will just kill you. It will grind you into the ground and make you a neurotic mess. For these guys they're able to do that objectively, dispassionately and then come up with sort of strategic and tactical solutions to either address or capitalize on those situations. So you find these like masters of the universe financier types who are like looking at every possible way the world can explode right? It's like okay what happens if you know the militant Islamists in Nigeria blow up following ABC oil fields to protest blah. Like what are the tertiary effects of that? What happens if the blah, blah, blah currencies collapsed that trigger this contagion because of high frequency trading units like in Singapore, I mean like --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: --these crazy chains of ripple effects that are able to put together and it's not that dissimilar from very high level like military if you think about it. At least from a sort of strategy standpoint although a lot of these obviously the seals one that are the operators and the rangers. So anyway just an observation more than anything else but it's just fascinating to kind of spot the similarities as well. These two groups end up being friends a lot of the time.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Tim Ferris: But there's a great book that I recommend if you haven't checked it out. Have you ever read this is not the book but have you ever read Wires Poker or Money Ball of any of the --

Robb Wolf: Yes. Yes.

Tim Ferris: --Michael Lewis book?

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Tim Ferris: There's a book like those for the hedge fund world called More Money Than God and --

Robb Wolf: I've heard of that.

Tim Ferris: -- it is fascinating. It is such a fascinating book. I mean the characters are just unbelievable. [Laughs] Unbelievably brilliant and unbelievably weird

and psychotic. But it's a fantastic book. I highly recommend checking it out.

Robb Wolf: That's not the guy that wrote the Big Short is it? Michael --

Tim Ferris: No, no it's not Michael Lewis.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

[0:55:00]

Tim Ferris: It's not Michael Lewis. So the big short would be similar right? You could read that and get a lot of hedge fund caller.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: If you really want to understand how hedge funds work The Big Sure is actually a good book. More Money than God is the one that just kind of struck my fancy and hit me at the right time maybe but it's worth checking out.

Robb Wolf: Nice, nice.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So what else? What else do you have cooking? What can folks -- so if they haven't checked out your podcast, they need to check out the podcast. What else do you have cooking?

Tim Ferris: You know, that's --

Robb Wolf: That's the biggie right now?

Tim Ferris: That's the biggie for the moment. I would say that TV stuff is pending. I'm working on a bunch of TV stuff that is TVD for a bunch of reasons I won't bore everyone with. Just rest assured if anything can go wrong delay television it always will. So if you get pitched any TV project that lasts less than a year ignore it because it false. It is made up and if you decide to do a TV project that lasts longer than a year, just double the amount of time that it will take and the amount of money it will cost and that's probably a more realistic estimate of your investment.

Robb Wolf: Perfect.

Tim Ferris: Yeah which is true for a lot of things right. If it's going to twice as long, it costs twice as much and if it's still worth doing then you should do it. Otherwise, probably not a good idea.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Tim Ferris: But you know, I mean I'm attempting to be in a simplification phase of sorts which is ongoing but I've stopped doing a lot of things and I'm trying to pay attention to the basics on Maslow's hierarchy man. Like the sleep stuff right. I mean I'm taking hot like Japanese soaking baths every night with Epsom salts and so on. I'm doing contrast therapy with hot and cold I mean the real basic, basic stuff. Doing the foam rolling I know I should do more consistently even if it's much shorter periods of time the higher frequency. Getting outside, imagine that, vitamin D. You know, actually go like shocker.

Robb Wolf: And being in nature.

Tim Ferris: Yeah being in nature like walking and touching it's free every once in a while. You know, like get the fuck outside. This type of thing I'm really trying to return on the basics because I found in my life as least whenever I find what I perceive to be a very sophisticated answer to my problems, it's almost – it's inevitably wrong. [Laughs] It's inevitably wrong or just a very cumbersome way to solve the problem. It's usually something very, very, very simple. So I'm trying to return to Occam's razor in that respect and you know, meditation has been very helpful. So I meditate every morning and I found it tremendously helpful for not being overly reactive more than I need to be throughout the day.

Robb Wolf: Do you use an app for that or do you do like transcendental meditation?

Tim Ferris: Yeah I do TM so transcendental meditation typically once a day if I'm feeling really ambitious then I'll do it twice a day. It's been a great experience.

Robb Wolf: I've actually been using and what is the new...? Meditation app which I've enjoyed a lot and I just find myself I'm definitely more that sympathetic dominant listen to death metal head butt bar, chew nicotine gum kind of person, brain wave is actually the one that I use. But I've found it a little bit of low level cardio like walking, doing some meditation, that is absolutely the broken piece in me. Like it's the lack of doing that type of stuff so yeah.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: I've found you know, we were talking about Dan Carlin earlier, I have found that long walks, listening to audio books or a very intelligent podcasts such as your own.

Tim Ferris: Thank you.

Robb Wolf: It solves a lot of problems. [Laughs]

Tim Ferris: Right. I feel like humans are designed to walk you know, Nassim Taleb would agree with this. I mean we're not intended to sit down as much as we sit down. So just like getting out and actually moving around and navigating in an environment even if it's an urban environment, for like an hour or two a day is hugely therapeutic in my experience so far. I mean I kind of go either really hard where I'm doing let's just say you know, two to three rep deadlift routines or I'm doing much more extended. I tend not to stay in the gray zone very much.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Tim Ferris: In the middle. Gray zone sounds negative. It's not intended to be but I tend to either do these days I have a very kind of barbell approach to not only investing but also my workouts, which I feel is really currently just giving me the best of both worlds. Like the physical and the psychological benefits.

Robb Wolf: Very cool. Well maybe at some point later we can get you back on and we can actually do a little bit of a finance and investing kind of perspective on this stuff.

Tim Ferris: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: I personally would find that one very fascinating.

[1:00:01]

Tim Ferris: Yeah, I'd love to do that and if people want to see just as a side note, kind of what I invest in, and you know, those includes some companies that have done pretty well in the last few years how I approach it you can go to angel list. So [Angel.co/Tim](https://angel.co/Tim) is where you can see my whole portfolio so if you're curious in seeing the kind of stuff that I invest in or tend to invest in in some of the commonalities across them, that will give you a pretty good picture.

Robb Wolf: Awesome. Tim it was great having you on man. I'm super stoked to connect with you whenever you have a chance. Keep us posted on what the next venture is.

Tim Ferris: Yeah. Thanks so much man. I'm excited to do some materials with HRV and I almost said IBF but that's not right, HRV.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] Be careful with that one.

Tim Ferris: And maybe do some more four point assessments as well so thanks. Thanks as always for taking the time man. This is great.

Robb Wolf: Great, Tim. Talk to you soon.

Tim Ferris: Bye buddy.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Bye-bye.

Tim Ferris: I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

[1:00:54] End of Audio