

Paleo Solution - 241

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Robb Wolf: Howdy folks, Robb Wolf here, another edition of the PaleoSolution podcast. Six listeners can't be wrong. Today we have our good friend Coach Christopher Sommer founder and developer of the gymnastic body system, author of many a book, creator of many an article and coach to many a champion. Coach how are you doing?

Chris Sommer: I'm doing good Robb, how are you today mate?

Robb Wolf: Good, good that was many, manys on our intro so.

Chris Sommer: That was many, many .

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Coach Sommer and I have been talking for almost an hour already so.

Chris Sommer: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: We're just kind of launching into this thing. Coach, what's new? How's everything going?

Chris Sommer: Oh good gracious. We are drowning in good things.

Robb Wolf: Nice.

Chris Sommer: So no it's interesting I guess before we get going in is we are finding out that we're getting around the world, therapists, we're getting physical therapists in various countries around the world. We're getting firemen now coming in and what we're getting is not necessarily gymnastics as their chosen method of conditioning but what they're reaching out for is the mobility, the weighted mobility and that we do to kind of try to address all the overuse entries that they've piled up over the years.

Robb Wolf: You know, that to me is not surprising at all and again I think I mentioned it on some podcasts. I mentioned it in a blogpost that I did talking about my training at 42. I mentioned going to the gymnastics body seminar learned a ton but then when I was sitting down and trying to think okay what exactly do I take out of this for old dude jujitsu like what are --

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: --my needs on this it was thoracic mobility, shoulder mobility. You know, trying to injury proof my shoulder, injury proof my low back. I've just started getting in and doing some of the knee sequences because the knees can definitely take a beating in jujitsu too depending on the type of game that you're playing. But for me it was more shoulders and kind of a tendency towards kyphosis because of you know, this kind of crunched up position. So that's what I ended up largely pulling out of that and using the way to dislocate some of the other progressions and getting in and just doing big, big repetition on skin the cat progressions and working that bicep tendon and that fully externally rotated position on the rings. It's been huge for me.

Chris Sommer: Just you saw that implemented in the workouts?

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah. And I just kind of cycle the volume and intensity on all of that stuff and then use that usually both at the beginning and the end. I've been playing around with what elements I do that as kind of warmup and prehab then what elements I do more in the cool down that I've been switching all those elements up. So it's like sometimes I'm doing some of this stuff a little bit on the cold side. Sometimes I'm doing it when I'm really warmed up and things are stretchy as they're going to get on me at that stage. It's been really interesting playing with all that.

Chris Sommer: That's funny because I'm 51 so I've got a bit on you but my body has naturally lately it seems like two days a week. It starts off as I'm going to do my mobility to warmup and then the body just thrives on it and I end up doing like an hour or two hours of all these mobility drills. It just seems like that's what my body wants. I was like pouring water on the dry sponge.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: So I'm just like well okay, scratch the four days no the schedule that were going to be normal conditioning conditioning and now I'm doing two hard days of conditioning and two days of just basically filled with mobility.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Chris Sommer: And not that stretching, stretching but you know all the way to mobility. We're building range of motion. We're trying to address range of motion deficits all that stuff.

Robb Wolf: Right. It makes sense. You know I remember when we were still in Chico. I had been traveling a lot sitting on planes, trains, automobiles and one day I was just kind of like I'm going to have a physio –you know, like a lacrosse ball and a foam roller and I'm just going to like you know, savage these things for about two hours. I did and I stood up after that. It was actually probably about 90 minutes. It wasn't the full two hours but I stood up and I was like it was like my body was glowing or humming.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Like I actually feel really good right now. But I'm kind of a knucklehead and I just – it's hard when you think about well I need to lift some weights to be strong and explosive and then I need to some conditioning so I've got my cardio down for the jits. So you continue to feel that shit but you –it's like well --

Chris Sommer: You're very well performing.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. You're great performing until you blow the gasket because you know your knee-hip tie-in isn't really working the way it should. So when you lunge forward like shoot a single leg or something. Stuff is not firing properly so, yeah it's interesting. It's not surprising at all particularly as folks get over and you know so much of what passes for prehab and rehab like when somebody gets out of that acute stage of say like a low back injury or any type of injury and you start trying to remodel tissue, if you're dealing with somebody particularly if they're older they have potentially thousands of hours of doing these activities , which has molded as you pointed out in the earlier shows, you know, not just the musculature and not just the tendons but the actual bones.

Chris Sommer: Yes.

Robb Wolf: Over the course of time, you end up modeling that stuff in a particular way and you need a similar volume, similar intensity to remodel that stuff and to start affecting change in a different direction. The weighted stretching is you know, I think may be one of the most powerful contributions that you've given to this whole strength and conditioning thing. Because nobody was using things like weighted dislocates and like sitting in the butterfly position and throwing some progressive overload in that position to open up the adapters of whatnot. Like that stuff just didn't exist before you hit the scene.

Chris Sommer: I've got two there. One is a smartass comment. We put something out and then suddenly once we put it out everyone says well everyone knows this.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: So I've been tempted to put something out wrong.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: Just to watch them all come.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Chris Sommer: That's evil. That's evil.

Robb Wolf: There's probably a bioethics committee fretting on that yeah.

Chris Sommer: I've got enough bad karma. I don't need more.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: But you know, what astounds me is that people work really, really hard and then when they go to do their mobility they go do to do their prehab, they use these minute loads. They think that you know, I just went out and I deadlifted, you know, whatever, hundreds of pounds and then I'm going to work my lower back with two pounds.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: That somehow this is going to address an issue.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: And it's not even going to make a dent.

Robb Wolf: Well that's why we have you and that's why we're stoked to have you on the show again. We did a couple of posts to kind of open the floor to folks to have a more direct access to Coach Sommer and we have to have a theme here. So a few of these questions are going to be a little bit repetitious and then we have a little bit more variety at the end. Coach if you feel like we bogged down and end up just getting too repetitious on this we can skip one or two major action.

Chris Sommer: Yeah, yeah, sure.

Robb Wolf: But the first one is from Andy, how to incorporate traditional weight training. Gentlemen the first episode of Robb's podcast I ever listened to for the first time was with Coach Sommer on as a guest. Needless to say, from then on I was hooked and have not only started incorporating some gymnastics body movements in my workouts but have signed up my two little kids ages six and three for gymnastics to set that solid foundation for the rest of their lives. My question is I've been a strength coach for 15 years and enjoy weight training looking at the gymnastics bodies message boards it sounds like the weight room is downplayed in favor of strictly performing only gymnastics related movements. Coach Sommer even alluded to this in his first podcast. For a guy like me 37 years old trying to stay ahead of father time, likes the weight room and who up until recently couldn't spell gymnastics if he had spotted it with all the consonants, how can I best use the gymnastics body system yet continue lifting my beloved weights?

Chris Sommer: You know, it's a great question and it's something we stress. You know, we've started doing more and more rehab. We never anticipate it or I never anticipated that the mobility was going to strike because it's for us you know, it's day and day it's our bread and butter. We kind of don't think about it. But I didn't realize what a chord it was going to strike with people. We don't want them to have to replace you know, their favorite workout. It's not by any means. But what I do want for beginners to do if they're hitting the weights is to put that on maintenance. Our courses are structured in the way they are because usually they're coming to us with compromised range of motion, mobility is just terrible and if we don't do first things first, if we don't correct that then they're either going to make very, very slow or no progress in fixing it.

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So and far as Andy's question there then my response would be if he's doing our courses, if he's doing foundation do his foundation work first, they alternate and exercise and his mobility. Now he can't get away, the structure is built in and then do some maintenance weights at the end if he has some energy.

Robb Wolf: You know, I've had a number of friends that I've gotten on to the foundation series got signed up with the whole gymnastics bodies programs. Mat Lalonde is one of them and --

Chris Sommer: Yeah we're getting ready to see Mat.

Robb Wolf: Yeah you're going to see that in Rhode Island. Mat is freakishly strong but he is --

Chris Sommer: I'm looking forward to that.

Robb Wolf: He has the mobility of a T-Rex who's been sitting in a recliner for a while so it will be interesting to see that stuff but --

Chris Sommer: At least it will be easy to recognize it.

Robb Wolf: Absolutely, yeah, yeah, yeah. [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: But he made the comment that when he first started looking at the say like the foundation series like the very first pass through he was like oh this stuff is kind of inconsequential. Like he's really done a good job of working his front level progressions, back lever progressions, hand stands all that type of stuff. But you know, he said by the time I worked may be I think like five sessions in, he was saying that he had a diamond roll out of his shorts after holding the --

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: --you know, the back extension position, the hollow rocking position on the floor and he's like trying to get 60 seconds of that five cycles with a brief rest. He said I literally think I made you know, converting carbon into diamond on that day so.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: It would be a new business for us.

Robb Wolf: It could be yeah, yeah, yeah and Mat's -- I'm sure Mat's gluts are strong enough to continue doing that so it will be interesting to see how Matt does that. We're going to get Matt on the show after he attends the gymnastics body seminar just to talk to him about nutrition and training -

Chris Sommer: I look forward to that.

Robb Wolf: --but then we'll pick his brain on what he pulls out of that event too. If you're game we'll get you on too and we'll do a big hoe down on that.

Chris Sommer: I would love that because you know we learn a lot when you know, probably the best thing about this last decade, these last ten years is that

the growth of the internet it allows people with different areas of expertise to interact in ways that we couldn't previously. And then consistently interact so that we know we can really explore each other's specialty. So love hearing someone like your background, I love Robb's or Matt's background. Look for you know, how does what we do impact what he does and then we can fine-tune it. You know, look for the sweet spot what is extraneous, what can be set aside that may be essential for gymnastics but not for someone who's doing weights exactly like you did with the dislocates and the Jefferson curl. You know, what were the essentials that everyone should be doing and then the others you know we have a choice.

Robb Wolf: Right. You know, it's interesting even with my training so I – like pistols are reasonably easy for me. I know there's lots of different progressions on that but I started looking at how long I have back squatted and dead lifted and literally since I was probably 13 or 14 there's rarely been a week that I didn't at least back squat or deadlift and frequently back squat and deadlift. You know, in like class.

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: Like 20+ years you know. So I started thinking okay how much more developmental potential have I got in these movements you know and probably not a lot when you get right down to it. So I started shifting stuff up and I've been doing weighted step ups both --

Chris Sommer: I love that exercise.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah with the weight on my back in the front rec position , which is actually really, really challenging and then also unilateral loading. So hold the kettle bell or a dumb bell in one hand and then do step ups and then for more of the deadlifting position where historically I just deadlifted or done heavy snatches, cleans, snatch pulls, cling pulls those sorts of things but still reasonably receive more motor pattern would have been doing it are largely straight leg deadlifts off the blocks and with a satch grip. So really huge range of motion and starting off very light and actually doing almost body builder type repetition, you know, 10 to 12 reps really lit up my hamstrings and my low back the first couple of times I've been doing it.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: And then I've just been doing kind of a linear progression on that. But lo and behold like I'm actually getting some really remarkable stimulus out and I've --

Chris Sommer: Sure.

Robb Wolf: -- I feel like it has some benefit. But I read another article where it was a power lifter talking about hey if you don't want to spend so much time doing mobility work, do these things because of the range of movement built in kind of baked into the cake, you're getting all these kind of peripheral benefits while you're doing the strength work too.

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Chris Sommer: Sure, sure.

Robb Wolf: So I've been looking at like the step up where I'm getting that complete closure of the knee joint on the bottom and all of that type of stuff but a little bit different patterning than just doing a pistol and then doing the straight leg dead lifts. I'm going to run that straight leg dead lift progression for as long as I can then go back and do single leg straight leg dead lifts and run that for a while.

Chris Sommer: What's the load you're using right now on your Jefferson curls?

Robb Wolf: You know, the Jefferson curls I'm just using 45 to 55 pounds on that and that feels pretty good.

Chris Sommer: Okay. I would keep bumping that.

Robb Wolf: Okay, okay.

Chris Sommer: I would keep bumping that. Our goal on that one for you know, someone who's not dealing with issues, and we've had some people start you know, as low as five pounds and then they build up. I think Mark is at last I checked three quarter body weight right now.

Robb Wolf: wow, wow.

Chris Sommer: So you know, our goal is to get them to body weight then I'd be curious to see how that track -- because obviously we stop there. We're not weight lifters but I would be curious to see once you got to full body weight on a Jefferson curl the effect on your other lifting.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. Yeah and you know, for me again because the – and I forgot about mentioning Jefferson curl in there because it's in my rehab prehab block in my head. So you know, I'm not looking at is – it's like a --

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: A core lift even though really in a lot of ways it should be considered that. But again because of with jujitsu boxing--

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Individuals are so kyphotic and rounded forward in that posterior chain really is kind of an afterthought. People do lots and lots of abs but they don't do nearly as much like back extensions, hip bridging and all that type of stuff.

Chris Sommer: Yeah. You know, what we found that they overlooked? That especially people who are good at lifting, is their shoulder extension --

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum. Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: --their ability to lift their hands behind them --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: -- is good lord.

Robb Wolf: Abysmal yeah.

Chris Sommer: Nonexistent.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: Even interesting even someone who has reasonable well not great but you know, kind of expected shoulder flexion, they can't go all the way 180 lifting hands overhead but they're 10-degree short or whatever. We'll put them and check their shoulder extension and there's not only – no range of motion going back but there's no range of motion when their hands are like out at way past double shoulder width. They're almost out to triple shoulder, some of them, and they still can't move.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. It's I mean that's just as if the whole shoulder extension motor pattern it's like it's innervated. It's like when somebody hurts -

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: --their low back and their glut goes dead on them or something like that like it's almost denervated in that case. Would you agree with that or kind of what you observe?

Chris Sommer: Not you know, what I think is they have to remember the nature of the shoulder itself and obviously I'm not a PT as you know, an old national team coach but it has tremendous range of motion. There's no other joint in the body that has the same range of motion as the shoulder. Then take this structure and it's not supported, supported. It hangs there and then they want to train it in a single range of motion. They want it in a single plane of motion and then they wonder why it acts up on them over time.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Chris Sommer: You got to train all areas for it to be balanced, for it to be healthy. Maybe --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: --not with the same intensity. You got to do your favorite thing that's fine but we at least have to use what it can do.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. And you know, it's I think those gosh what do you guys call them where you get up into a plank position, hands on the ground, lots in the air and then the feet are on like some slidy disks?

Chris Sommer: The man of slides.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: The man of wall slides.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah, the man of wall slides. Yeah. Those were a pretty good eye opener for me because I have nothing going on on them. Not much at all. I'm usually decent at some stupid human tricks and then there were a couple of folks at the seminar that have been working their way through the totality of the foundations series and those things and then the dips where you are dipping behind yourself and remaining completely vertical.

Chris Sommer: The Korean dips.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. The Korean dips. Those were inconsequential for these folks and for me I again you know, like diamond rolled out of my shorts and I just didn't have the motor patterning down for that stuff at all but these folks were kind of like yeah you know, if you just follow the fucking program it's not a big deal. [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: Yes, it's amazing how that works.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, shocked.

Chris Sommer: I think sometimes and I think what sometimes they fail to appreciate is the perspective that I've come to training from is that other people, not all of them but there are other trainers out there they'll choose something just because it's interesting. Because it's cool because it's flashy, because it will make them stand out. There's none of that in my mind filling this in our training and I apologize for anyone who's offended by that. But you know, we didn't – I don't – my athletes don't train manas and side leverage because they're cool party tricks. We train the manna because we need that shoulder extension strength.

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Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: We need that range of motion. We train the side levers and the side lever pulls because the spine also has to have rotational strength. You know, thoracic spine has to rotate as well as flex and –hell it's designed to do that. So by getting stronger in those areas it increases our performance and then you know, my job is was and I step down from coaching in December but my job was to produce athletes to be on the US national team. That was my job, which meant we had to have a tool that could accomplish that. So they had to be strong, they had to be mobile, they had to be healthy. We didn't do man in side lever because they're cool. You know, our Olympic coach could give a shit if it's cool.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. That foundation established to be able to do the bigger work ahead.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah.

Chris Sommer: Deal the body first and then turn it loose.

Robb Wolf: Right. Well coach I'm going to skip the second question because it's a little --

Chris Sommer: Kid of same huh?

Robb Wolf: I should say kind of the same. This one is from Logan, gymnastics and Olympic lifting. Hello I've listened to all of Coach Sommer's podcasts and at the end of one of yours he mentions the only group of people who out jumped his athletes were those who combined Olympic lifting and gymnastics and that he was interested in looking into it more. I'm wondering if he ever did, if he has more thoughts on it and how one would implement Olympic lifting with his foundations program or even upper level gymnastics.

Chris Sommer: Love it, love the question. Who was that that asked that?

Robb Wolf: That's from Logan.

Chris Sommer: Logan. Beautiful question. We're real serious about checking it out. Now on of the great things about focusing on gymnastic bodies now and not having to focus on US national team is it's kind of freeing and that I don't have to work within the same constraints. I don't have this massive block of time that has to be spent on technical skill development. I don't have to worry about are the legs going to get too big for a world-class gymnast. So we've been fairly aggressive. Now of course not my specialty. I have people who work for me who are much better at Olympic lifting than I am. So I've been sending those people to the experts you know, where we're working on integrating. What we're finding is that the Chinese method of how they trained the Olympic lifts and I can't give them specifics. I'm just getting my head wrapped around this myself is very similar to the kind of physical cues for execution that we use in gymnastics. So it was like coming home. They do a lot, they start lifts with a lot of protraction. They use their lats a lot coming off. They pull much higher. They use the quads.

So you know, these are things I'm still learning now where a lot of our people are told you know, they're going to lean back toward the heels. They want to be on midcourt and doing more of a vertical jump.

Robb Wolf: Hmm.

Chris Sommer: So we're having a good time exploring that. We just had some staff come back from spending two days with one of the Chinese Olympic coaches. We're going to keep exploring it. What we're finding and I know people

it's important I think for people to understand that sometimes the intensity they enjoy is they're doing it because they enjoy it not necessarily because it's productive.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: They're kind of addicted to the adrenaline if you will and that they don't need to go to the well as often as they think they need to go. So some things that we're playing with is you know, if it's going to be a press handstand day obviously GST, gymnastics strength training is our primary focus. So it's putting snatch in the power snatch variation in the warmup appropriate? If it's going to be a ring strength day is putting some hang cleans or some PowerPoints in the warmup going to be appropriate. What's the training cycle we're going to use? What's the road we're going to use? Those are all things where we're exploring right now. The people who out jumped us back in the day it was fairly, fairly simplistic programming. They had a GST day and they had an Olympic lifting day. And then sometimes you know they would split the week. You know, there's a million ways you can set it up but may be it was two days a week of lifting, one of GST and the next week they would just – two week cycle 2 GST one of lifting.

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Something I found interesting that the Chinese – I even had a worldclass Olympic level. They're only training an hour and a half a day.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. Huh.

Chris Sommer: Yeah there's very – and you know, we did the same. What we find is that people they would look at how an elite level gymnast trains and they hear five hours a day, six hours a day, seven hours a day and three workouts and they go oh my god and they –but what they don't understand is that's not all conditioning.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: And but we see a lot of schedules out there from people who mean well. I know they mean well. I'm not hassling them for that. It was just they didn't do enough research to be able to give out good advice so they're trying to give these people conditioning programs that last for five, six, seven hours a day and they're crushing people.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Chris Sommer: They're coming to me afterwards with these raging cases of tendonitis in their elbows and they're like coach I was just training like you. That's not – don't put that one on my plate.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: Do this.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah. You weren't training with me until you were actually training with me so --

Chris Sommer: Yeah. And now we can't train. We have to fix it first. We're going to train later. First we're just going to heal.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. Well in that you know I think that that kind of covers the fourth question that we had , which was how would you program Olympic weight lifting combination with gymnastics strength training that there's a lot of different ways to slice and dice that like an alternating schedule seems pretty good. Even do a --

Chris Sommer: Probably the simplest

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: It could be your simplest way. You know it would be kind of interesting you know, one that comes to mind is it could be Olympic lifting day. It could be a GST day. It could be a dedicated way of mobility day.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: You know, and they can wait if they run in on two-week cycle or three-week cycle, with a different primary focus each week that you know, there's – it's not that there's – in some of those detail work, it's not that there's a right and a wrong approach. It's just an overall it needs to be a balanced approach.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. And again depending on what the goals are and all that type of stuff yeah.

Chris Sommer: Exactly.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: Exactly. But what we're finding with we're starting to get some –you know, some upper level crossfit people coming in and some education forum, some education. Obviously you know, they want. They want to bump their performance levels in gymnastics up but we're finding that before we can even really start addressing that, we're having to go back through and correct some mobility – well a lot of correcting mobility.

Robb Wolf: Right. Hey, coach I've got a good one for you.

Chris Sommer: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: So I think it was after your seminar in Chico and you were talking about how like rings have been on the –you know, the fitness scene what would you say ten years now, ten years plus and --

Chris Sommer: It was probably some smart ass comment.

Robb Wolf: It was great. It is smart-ass but it's also very well informed. The two can't be mutually exclusive all the time but you know you made this observation that these rings of. So we've had Olympic lifting kind of within let's say the crossfit scene for the same duration and we have some really impressive lifts--

Chris Sommer: Yeah they're --

Robb Wolf: -coming up at the scene.

Chris Sommer: -- some bees I'm impressed.

Robb Wolf: Yeah there are some legit lifts coming out there but yet the rings had been in that scene for an equal period of time and mainly what we have is an abomination. Like horrible --

Chris Sommer: Sure.

Robb Wolf: --muscle ups.

Chris Sommer: Sure.

Robb Wolf: You know, when that may be kind of sort of front lever usually with internal rotation and not the actual development of like the bicep tie-in and all that stuff. So really not much to speak of. We don't have any -

Chris Sommer: That much progress huh.

Robb Wolf: -- pauses. Yeah so I threw that out to a guy who does a lot of coaching for crossfit athletes and he said well what does that even matter. Lacrosse isn't part of crossfit competition. And that I was kind of like okay but may be it should be. You know, this is some of the stuff of like if you sat down at the table of what this thing -

Chris Sommer: I know.

Robb Wolf: - is to me almost an infinite progression and part of the --

Chris Sommer: I see where you're going so --

Robb Wolf:skill oriented..

Chris Sommer: They're going towards higher and higher levels of proficiency that have to be demonstrated in Olympic lifting why aren't they required to demonstrate higher and higher levels of proficiency in gymnastics as well.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah.

Chris Sommer: That's interesting and that was always my thought about crossfit and I think in the original iterations when it was a minimum investment maximum return kind of story, you know, always the metabolic conditioning has been kind of a central feature because it's a heck of a wakeup call doing something like five pull-ups, ten push-ups, 15 squats, 20 minutes of it and it ends up just smashing you. You know, like there's a certain wakeup call piece to that. But my mind was always that at some point you should see a workout that involved you know, standing backflips, plus handstand walk 40 feet plus you know, and some other crazy stuff that would have a metabolic component to it but would have a really remarkable skillset buy-in. Like you can you even sit down at the table with these and it hasn't really gone on that direction.

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So I mean for me like if you like if you are developing an athlete and an individual does have an iron cross they probably have a lot of other interesting things --

Robb Wolf: Exactly the point I was wanting to go to.

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: You know, with regards to injury prevention and they can just generally do a lot of other cool stuff.

Chris Sommer: And --

Robb Wolf: What are your thoughts on that?

Chris Sommer: Well you know, as far conditioning is concerned lacrosse is a very cool thing. But then what it does with connective tissue and what it does for their ability to generate maximal force is immense. So we – it's not unusual at all for a gymnast who has reasonably strong, they got a cross, they got planche, probably getting into so Maltese work a for them to first time grab a bar and do a double body weight bench. Now what we do get is we get – we get the serious weight lifters who are saying well double body weight bench you know, BFT who cares. Who cares but the point is that that came without any specific training for the bench or we're getting people at that level of strength where they're getting you know, our guys in 40 minutes we're jerking or Olympic jerking body weight and a half.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: You know, of course they go and they guys were purists at this. They're saying well body weight and a half, you know, by world standards whatever. But my point is that they hadn't done it. The body was prepared in a way that let them generate that strength transferred. So I think you look at it at two points as one you know, crossfit if they're going to stay true to the same approach that they did with their Olympic lifting with proficiency has to improve then their GST is going to have to improve.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: I think this year we saw that the kipping work that they're doing doesn't transfer strength wise. As soon as they took – a lot of them as soon as they took their kipping out they had to do a strict muscle up they got zero reps. Or they weren't able to do their kipping hand stand pushups or heads down pushups because head is going to the ground you know, they dropped to zero reps where the other direction if you have the strict strength once you teach them a little bit of timing, they can obviously do the kipping.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Chris Sommer: The other way it doesn't work so I would look at it at transferability. It's not going to just help me athletically to do a cross. Probably the biggest

misunderstanding over the last decade was that the preposition that Olympic lifting was strength training, which then meant we had to be methodical, we had to be progressive, we had to do drills, we had to be very exact and careful in our analysis at what we're doing wrong, what we're doing right.

Then over in the corner we just kind of threw GST. We just kind of threw gymnastics strength training over there because it wasn't considered strength training, it was considered skill training. At skilled training they thought they could get some really solid results just from messing around with the muscle up a little bit you know, ten minutes. I've seen people that bring me their schedule and say go gym, I'm having trouble with my muscle up development and they'll show me their layout for the day and at the end of their schedule it's going to say ten minutes of muscle up work. Well I never saw a schedule that said I'm going to do ten minutes of snatch work and that was the amount of detail that went into the planning. [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Chris Sommer: There were no breakdown, there were no drills, there were no stretches, there were no progressions. Can you imagine? So I went back in the day kind of that's what it was wasn't it? You know, before they got noticed. When they wanted to get serious about increasing their proficiency and Olympic lifting, they started training the way high-level Olympic lifters trained. That's when they started doing their periodization, that's when they started monitoring their load. That's when they started doing their drills and their progressions. So to my mind and I've always kind of found it curious that they could be that exact in their Olympic lifting but then when it came to gymnastics strength training, they can –hadn't quite yet seen the light that they needed to apply that same approach.

Robb Wolf: Right. Well you know, I love Olympic weight lifting, love it, love it, love it. It's not a simple thing to teach. It's a whole Olympic sport but I would make the argument that it's – you've got select rise plates so you've tiny incrementation.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

[0:35:00]

Robb Wolf: You've got two basic core movements and then you've got the assistance movements of squatting and pressing and lunging and doing all that type of stuff. So I think –you know, and even from my own training I've always wanted to “do more gymnastics” you know, oriented training and a little

bit of my Capoeira background has been helpful because it's given me a little bit of an idea about like oh I could kind of structure this this way or that way. It's still been hard for me and that's where when you release this program, it really opened a lot of doors and it's that's one thought. One, I think that it's made it much more accessible because you have the equivalent of like select rised weight incremented --

Chris Sommer: Exactly.

Robb Wolf: -- plate so that you can start chasing this thing down and you're not trying to figure out so what the heck do I do to chase a plange.

Chris Sommer: You know, and to clarify a little bit for the guys who don't know the course, so what we do is we use progressions to basically load the exercise.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: So easier progressions --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: It's like taking more weight off the bar, we're starting with the bare bar.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: And then as they progress through, they go to harder variations as they're getting weight on to the bar.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. And you know, when you look at it you're kind of like okay that makes sense. But you know, I looked at calculus at some point and I became reasonably good at it but I would have never sat down and cooked up calculus. Kind of like --

Chris Sommer: Sure.

Robb Wolf: --did you know.

Chris Sommer: Sure.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah.

Chris Sommer: But and sometimes what we run into and maybe it's just my background but sometimes we get people and they want to do an iron cross. I want

them to do an iron cross too. But it's no – you have to start at the beginning.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: It's like if someone wants to bench 300 pounds, they don't start with 300 pounds. But we keep getting these people who you know, with best of intentions they just don't understand. They think well it's just body weight. Well there's actually not that simple. There's a lot of physical preparation that goes into that so that you can benefit from the training not just beat yourself up from the training.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. Let's see here. There's a low back question. Oh you know what, there was one other thing that I was going to mention with regards to that I forgot it. May be I'll remember what it was. It was like 50 things when you're talking there but well you know even just within our own Norcal scene like doing more traditional strength and conditioning we – it became obvious for me early on you know, like this idea of scaling. I have possibly a pithy saying "if you're scaling you're failing". It should be progression and progression only. You know, like if your first day in the gym, if the workout on the board says power clean and this individual things that that means putting extra soap in the washer.

Chris Sommer: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Because they've never lifted a barbell or a dumbbell or done anything like that then you're failing on that person. You know you need to do an assessment and lay a foundation and they do you know, basic body weight movements first and get proficiency with that and then start you know, you deadlift for a power clean and --

Chris Sommer: And not just in case of body, not just the basic movements but also the basic range of motion.

Robb Wolf: Exactly. Exactly.

Chris Sommer: So you know, we don't jump.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: That was probably the thing that I found most familiar with the Chinese approach to Olympic lifting was that and correct me if I'm wrong you have much more experience with this. They don't try to put them in a beginner into a full squat right away. They start with power variations.

Robb Wolf: You know, I'm not familiar with that but it kind of makes sense to me you know, if they're just focusing on the pull element.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Then it makes sense to me you know, --

Chris Sommer: Yes.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: And they're saying that physically they can't get into correct position yet anyway.

Robb Wolf: And these are Asian squatters too. [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: Exactly.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: Well that's a great point. Because we've had seminars you know, and Singapore comes to mind where we had a wall full of Asians and then just happen to be on the other side was all westerners and expats who are in there and going through stretch protocol, they've got two very, very different reactions. See the Asians were all relaxed, coach how can I make this a little more and then as I walk down the European wall there was just profanity after profanity.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Chris Sommer: Cussing after cussing and I stayed by the European wall just because it was more entertaining.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. And clearly and need more help. But that's fascinating. I was not aware of that but even by the standards that they want from their technical progression they are going to slowly remodel the soft tissue and the bony tissue to get the proper --

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: --receiving position and the clean and the snatch and these kids who are more mobile than normal and in the culture that is more mobile than

what we would you know, be in the squatting position they're still not up to snuff. So they need to press that over time, that's fascinating.

[0:40:13]

Chris Sommer: And you know, what else? I know it's Asian and they're patient. They're not afraid of looking at training in a one-year block.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: So I found it interesting that if they're selected for training their first two years they not only don't touch a bar they don't even touch PBC. It's all gymnastics strength training.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: It's all basic body weight prep just to get them ready so that they can go spend you know, their uber amount of hours working with the PBC.

Robb Wolf: Right. Well and you see like even their team members are doing unsupported you know, chest contact handstand pushups on a bench.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: You know, and they're bowed over a little bit and --

Chris Sommer: Sure, sure.

Robb Wolf: -stuff like that.

Chris Sommer: --that's not -- it's not gymnastics standards but you know, they're getting after. They're --

Robb Wolf: Dude--

Chris Sommer: It's impressive

Robb Wolf: Outside of gymnast though nobody else is doing something like that. Like it's damn impressive you know, --

Chris Sommer: Yes. I saw one of their girls pop up and she must have done -- now this was you know, full. Now we separate -- I know crossfit blurs the lines a little bit and some other people they're calling, if you're upside, if you're going upside down and you're pressing it's a handstand push-up.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: We go well you know, if your head is going to the floor that's a headstand.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: That's like doing a a military press that starts from the top of your head and then presses out. And then a handstand is where it goes all the way down you know, hands down to the shoulders. So this little lady you know, coach was helping her balance. She must have banged up 20 handstand push-ups. Now the form wasn't great by gymnastic standards. She wasn't hollow. She wasn't posture your pelvic tilt all the stuff. But son of a gunman she banged up 20 great reps. I was like holy molly.

Robb Wolf: And you think about the overhead support strength that you get out of that and you know like something that I noticed when I was doing more of the Capoeira and just being on my hand, the only time in my life I've had over a body weight standing press was when I was doing Capoeira.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: And I was doing tons of both handstand and headstand pushups and I was just on my hands --

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: --on walking around --

Chris Sommer: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: - and I ended up at you know, 170, 172 pounds at 192 pound standing press , which isn't spectacular for --

Chris Sommer: Perfect.

Robb Wolf: --but I'm a little lanky on the pressing. It's interesting. I'm reasonably strong on the pulling so like when you gave me the recommendation to do a lot of static hangs to develop my one-arm chin, I was continuing doing weighed chins, rope climbs, and then just did a ton of single arm and double arm hanging and then one day a client walked by and they're like why are you hanging like that. I was like well it's going to help me do a one-arm pull up. They said well can you, and lo and behold I did so it's --

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: And again the first time I had ever achieved a one-arm chin and I just – it's interesting on the joint prep and that kind of you know, Pavel talked a lot about this stuff. You know, like pressing certain pieces and I remember when I was powerlifting I would do isometric holds on the deadlift and the bench specifically as sticking points and you know, load up the bar with like 700 or 800 pounds where I couldn't move it. And then wherever my sticking point was just do it really hard isometric at that point and it was very helpful. I see similar stuff with the you know, the static hanging, static handstand holds, they do something interesting for your strength that you know do you need to train the full range of movement? Yes but that synergy there is really, really interesting.

Chris Sommer: I think that was something that I didn't give enough credit so we kind of we kept thinking you know, here is our conditioning that we do but that conditioning doesn't exist in isolation. That conditioning is sandwiched with all our technical training, which if we strip all the technical skills away we're left with exactly what you're talking about. If we're doing high bar, we're doing range, what are we doing? We're hanging. We're hanging for you know, 30 minutes a day. Rake's broken in. We're on pommel horse, we're on parallel bars, you know, what are we doing? Well we're either in an upright support or we're in a handstand or we're transitioning between the two. There is not you know, a ton of arm bending going on and so yeah I was surprised at the results because I had the same results as you. You know, starting doing the one arms hanging work.

Now I do – because there's going to be people that are going to hear the podcast and the first thing they're going to do is they're going to be excited, they're going to be pumped, they're going to not open the door. They're going to run through the doors. They're going to be a little outline of their body.

Robb Wolf: Outline of their body yeah.

Chris Sommer: They're going to go jump on the bar and they're going to hang with one arm. Obviously you got to build up to it. You know, the same that they're not going to, I don't want them to go in and jump in right into a one-arm handstand. You know, I'm trying to do 30 minutes worth of work. You know, they're going to get hurt. So they just didn't listen to their body. You know, be gradual. It's not a race. You know, there's – well they're not training for world championships. They're not can we just finish. By the way US men got bronze.

[0:45:21]

Robb Wolf:

Yes.

Chris Sommer:

Yay to us. They did awesome. Very good job. But you know, most of us at this point in our lives where we're watching those competitions. So we spoke earlier about what we want is we want that intersection that where it's maximal health and wellness and it's maximal performance. We don't want to take the performance so far that we're damaged. We don't want to take health so far that they're afraid to work out and use their body. We want that sweet spot.

Robb Wolf:

Right. You know, I remember long time ago you had mentioned something along that line that say like in the may be the late '70s, early '80s that there was an over emphasis in hypertrophy in the gymnastics scene.

Chris Sommer:

Right.

Robb Wolf:

And you ended up with some folks that ended up horribly kyphotic and like they ended up having some problems and they were actually over muscled in the whole process.

Chris Sommer:

Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf:

And then you had to unwind the tape and make things more neurological and get enough engine to do what they needed to do. But then you focus on the technicality and the proficiency kind of thing.

Chris Sommer:

Yeah my favorite and we just went over that. We did some work with some firemen yesterday and my favorite way to describe that is for your chosen activity, for your –you know, it has to be something you enjoy in life obviously that's why we do what we do. But you need an optimal surplus of strength. We don't need more than the optimal amount. Can we quibble about what that percentage is going to be? Sure. We can quibble the way I describe it to the guys is is it possible for you to be at 100% day in, day out? Obviously not. We just can't do it. So if your job requires you though for at your current level of strength and your level of strength is that 100% and that's the bare minimum you know, or the moderate that you have to be able to do obviously you're going to fail a great deal of the time. But if you can build enough optimal surplus of strength that now to perform what you need to do only requires 70% you can do that all day long, all day, all night seven days a week. You're not

going to have a problem with that. You do it tired. You do it sick. You're going to be fine.

So that's kind of how I look at things in my head is you know, can you get by with 70% of the strength that you build, 70% of the mobility you've built. That's pretty comfortable. The body is pretty comfortable there. If you have to strain constantly you know, and it takes everything you have, you're either overshooting, you're above your head or your preparation is lacking. You've not seen things through, you've not explored what you need to do long term enough.

Robb Wolf: I like it. I like it. This I think kind of flows into that well there's a question from [name withheld] asking about low back exercises. Coach this would be one of those things that falls under Robb's ask things that help you personally habit, which I actually got that from Dan John. I had attribution where it's appropriate.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Do you have specific recommendations for exercises or progressions to prevent low back pain? Is there a specific series I should be focusing on with this intention while doing the gymnastics body's foundation? I know you're an advocate of the Jefferson curl but not sure if that is something that one would have to ease into from a childhood after years of gymnastics training? I'm a nongymnast, hockey player type and working on the gymnastic body's foundations. I started standing at work but still have the occasional low back tweaked most recently after doing I don't know what while just squatting on my floor and messing around. I'm sick of that kind of BS taking me out of training for up to a week. Are there any other exercises or progressions I should be doing suitable for mere mortals?

Chris Sommer: Mere mortals.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs] But not yet graduating from the foundations by any means. Last podcast with Robb you mentioned a side lever helping a gymnast both diagnose and fix his back issues. I remember that but I'm not clear on whether that translates to people who are only in the first step of gymnastics bodies. Thank you.

Chris Sommer: Wow. You've got great people Robb, great questions.

Robb Wolf: All six listeners are phenomenal. They're the salt of the earth.

Chris Sommer: We got --

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: ...are impressive

Robb Wolf: -- snuck in yeah.

Chris Sommer: [Laughs] Excellent. So what I need to do then is back up a bit for so absolutely but before what we do before someone is allowed to go into specific back or side lever work is we do back extension work, art shop work where there's leg lift work. There's a whole range of things we do.

[0:50:01]

And then remember those are always coupled with mobility, then from there we go to reverse, you know, yada, yada. There's this probably 20 different exercises we take them through before we do specific back lever or side lever. What I would like to point out is that a lot of people this is why they get caught on the well even on our introductory stuff in the hollow body rock, in the arched body rock is a fundamental misunderstanding of what it is at the core does. What is it that obliques do? What is it the abs do? What is it the erectors do? What is their job and can they be used to generate enormous force? Absolutely. Absolutely. But day in and day out their job is to stabilize the torso. You know, it's the carry it around on top of the legs and stabilize where they're carrying a load, which means their first and foremost function is endurance based.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum. Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: So for example I can take my athletes and have them do secure their legs, have them do back extensions with a 45-pound plate and they'll go that's great coach. If I have them go a series we will do that they hated with all their life was six curling back extensions into six regular back extensions into alternating direction for six circular back extensions, six R chops there and then hold horizontal and do slow not the fast Russian twist where they bounce and try to use momentum to get through the 20 reps but just do slow Russian twists from side to side. They hate that more than anything on the planet.

Robb Wolf: Oh just the hollow --

Chris Sommer: [Laughs] --

Robb Wolf: -- you get arched rock. You've heard my whining about it last time. Like I was willing to cover myself in honey and crawl in an anthill in lieu of doing that. I'm like surely some hit bridges and all these other stuff will do the same thing. You know, I mean I don't need to mess around with that. I was doing anything I could to avoid those damn things. So yeah that sounds like passing a bowling ball sized kidney stone for me.

Chris Sommer: Yeah, yeah pretty much and don't feel bad because you know our lead athletes felt the same.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: So what that shows though is that that's what that's designed to do.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: And then the other is would be our secondary focus. You know, do we do add weight and we're going to add ten pounds for specific athletes that they're advanced enough for hanging glide cliff. Sure, sure, we're going to get to that. Are we going to do a partner pressing with all their might on a reverse leg lift like the reverse hyper machine sure? But the fundamental foundation that's built on are these longer duration sets because that's the nature of the muscle, that's its job.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: So a lot of that will take care of the back pain. Now I learned a lot because we get to interact with so many great people from around the world so a lot of the stuff we learned was we know it works but we don't necessarily, I don't necessarily have the background to be able to tell you always why it works.

Robb Wolf: Right. Breaking down the kinesiology and whatnot.

Chris Sommer: Exactly. So they'll come in and they'll go you know, coach you understand just instinctually after you know, 40 years of doing this stuff that it takes x amount of time to retool the roller back. And then they'll go through it and they say coach you know, it makes perfect sense and here is why. This fascia through there is like a big thick piece of leather. They said you know, if they're in there doing surgery or it's an autopsy or something it's not a little slice-slice we get through. It says you've got to get in and then you've got work to get through this stuff. They said it is unbelievably tough and strong and durable. So they also then what that

tells us is that they have to approach their lower back work with patience.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: You know, they're not going to fix it this week. It's not going to happen. They're going to have to spend time so for example Mark's perfect example. It probably took him nine months to go from five pounds in his Jefferson curl calmly, patiently never moving on if there was any doubt up to three quarter body weight.

Robb Wolf: Wow.

Chris Sommer: He started and it wasn't just remember too it wasn't just the weight that he was increasing. It was also the range of motion. We want to see those hands just a little bit under the feet.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: If they're standing a bit of an elevated surface. So over that period of time right he not only went that much stronger from five pounds to $\frac{3}{4}$ of body weight but also greatly extended his range of motion.

Robb Wolf: Coach – clearly you have a Jefferson curl video as part of the --

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum. Yes.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, maybe..

Chris Sommer: It's in the course. We should pull it out so people could see.

Robb Wolf: May be we could pull that out and throw it in the show notes so that folks have a little --

Chris Sommer: Sure.

[0:55:00]

Robb Wolf: --taste of what that looks like. Because it sounds like that's a I don't know that it would be a catchall but it's damn close to it. It's one of those things that is so different from you know, like Romanian dead lifts, straight leg dead lifts you know, all the usual stuff and the fact for a lot of the folks like we started – that's a thing that we started using at Norcal. We started loading people on that with just running hands down their shins at first.

Chris Sommer: Really?

Robb Wolf: And --

Chris Sommer: Well yeah so may be the torso --

Robb Wolf: from that.

Chris Sommer: May be the torso for them at first is enough load.

Robb Wolf: It absolutely was.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Yeah and --

Chris Sommer: And just to let them know I didn't create Jefferson curls. I don't know where the name came from. I came across the reference may be gosh may be 30 years back.

Robb Wolf: Okay.

Chris Sommer: In some work by the old squat guy Fred Hatfield.

Robb Wolf: Okay, okay.

Chris Sommer: So power lifters actually used to be in power lifting because they're primary, they will use it, they want to recondition because all the anterior pelvic tilt work they did, they wanted to rebuild all the ligaments in between the vertebrae for health.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: And so we've just found it enormously helpful.

Robb Wolf: Awesome. Awesome. Well let's do one a shoulder question this one is from John. I've been incorporating shoulder dislocates, Cuban presses and skin the cats and then my warmups as have I and training my shoulders are definitely stronger, more stable and pain-free thank you. What do you know about Jonathan Horton's shoulder reconstructions.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Why were they necessary? Do you think he could have done something to prevent them?

Chris Sommer: Well you know, great question. I will say that out of national team coaches I am the only one that is almost obsessed with prehab.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: My greatest fear has always been not a technical failure but that I would have missed correctly building a body that could handle the stress of being in Olympic trials, preparing for an Olympic team you know, being healthy. It's one thing to have all that stress or that level of competition and be healthy and it's another thing to be there and have your body broken and still trying to deal with it at the same time. So that was always my nightmare and you know, what people I think need to understand is that I've always been very sensitive to the fact that most injuries are not muscle tissue. Most injuries are connective tissue are in joint. We tend – I think we tend to overlook that and so I didn't do Jonathan's training. I will say that at national team camps when I would take Allan through his shoulder prep with me. A lot of them they would look at it and a lot of the coaches would look and they were like wow, that's awesome and they should start right then. But I don't know that it remained a priority for them long term. These are things that require months, years.

So like or knee series that we do my athletes and we learned from a Bulgarian Olympic coach my athletes have done that for 12 years now.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: You know, consistently, you know, week in, week out. Did the dosage vary? Was it sometimes three times a week, four times a week, sometimes two? Absolutely. But consistently over that 12-year period they did it at least twice a week. So it's enough time the multiple cycles of adaption to happen from being exposed to that we have just as much shoulder mobility as we have shared, we're still building people up. We have a lot more very cool, very much more advanced shoulder mobility work that my own athletes could perform that aren't appropriate yet for – I mean it's not that it would hurt them. It was just they wouldn't be able to do it. It's body weigh based and they would just basically hang there and flail around and we don't have all the good time we could take some entertaining pictures but --

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: You know, it won't be productive training for them yet.

Robb Wolf: Much like me doing the man of wall slide attempt and --

Chris Sommer: I did enjoy that immensely.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah.

Chris Sommer: I – [Laughs] He's doing the right things with the shoulder dislocates. Now with the Cuban presses just a couple of tweaks for him there is that everyone's shoulders are different. So I have some athletes have ten reps on shoulder dislocates is good. I find for myself that if I stop at ten reps, if during that ten so we want – just to reiterate for me we want to start with a wide grip. We start with a weight and as we master that weight, increase range of motion that would be considering mastering that weight.

[1:00:02]

We want to keep narrowing the grip until we get may be a hand's width just outside the shoulders. Well if I'm doing shoulder dislocates personally, in a set it takes my shoulders. You know, if I'm using a reasonable load it takes my shoulders ten reps to get warm. So then I find after I pretty much from my own body I'm better with doing 18/20 reps. It takes me ten to get warm. Can I – I start pushing narrowing that grip prior to that but my shoulders just aren't happy and I've screwed up enough times now that when my body gives me a single I try to pay attention on those. Because I hate getting injured more than anything in the world.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: But after about that tenth rep, now I can start inching a finger width at a time, a finger width at a time, over those you know next 7, 8, 9 reps. That works very well for me. I do see sometimes people who are doing the shoulder dislocates they're not treating it. I remember too one of the reasons that protocol works is this is connective tissue. You know, the muscles are working also that's fine but we've got to give that connective tissue a chance to warm. We've got to give it a chance to flesh with blood before we can actually start having an effect on it. So sometimes I see them approaching their mobility with too much intensity, too much load. Reps are too low where they're trying to treat it as muscle tissue training. You know, they're trying to treat it as a bench-press.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Chris Sommer: And you know, they've got to respect it. Cuban presses I did have one of our Italian students give me a wonderful variation so I have very strong rotator cuffs. It's kind of one of those lucky things I was born with. I certainly didn't do specific training for it. It used to annoy the hell out of my athletes that they would be struggling and I could go up and do more weight than them without working out.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: That being said, when Alex told me about this variation I tried it and it cut my load by probably 75%. So the variation is it's supine, lying on the back, start with the bar whatever they're going to use the normal 90 degrees between the torso and 90 degrees between the upper and lower. Where it gets a little complicated is so we're laying on the ground like we were going to do a floor press so everyone understands floor press.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: We can't go deeper. And then letting it rotate back behind the head. So I just did these yesterday so as I'm sitting here going through the motion, my rear delts are fried right now. But in order to do it correctly, is that hands rotating backwards remember the shoulder blades, the scaps they protract, they retract, they elevate, they deep press and they also rotate. They also rotate and a lot of times we don't go over rotation because it tends to be overly subtle for beginners but we'll give it a shot here because they can lay on the ground and feel it. So as that bar is going back behind their head they need to think about pulling the shoulder blades against it going the other direction.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: So instead of may be the easy way is instead of letting the hand go back and letting the shoulder blades arch up off the ground, pulling the ribs down the other direction, which now puts the load instead of being carried by the scaps it puts it directly on to the rotators.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. Is it a bad sign that I'm cramping just trying to do that? Talking to you?

Chris Sommer: [Laughs]

Robb Wolf: Possibly a sign of some weakness in that area. [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: Well you know, the sweet thing is that actually you know, when I guess there's two ways to look at it. When some people would look at it and they say it, it's a bad sign I look at it as a good sign. I look at it as man we just found the weak link and now we can get in here and we can dig at it and we can work it. We can fix it.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. So I totally agree.

Chris Sommer: It's almost never a primary mover that fails. It's always a supporting structures that fail.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: Let's see skin the cat, careful, carefully skin the cat. We – as long as we're doing foot supported it's okay. What we find and some of the street workers are running into this now is that people get very, very strong and their strength is in far in advance with their mobility. So we have this monstrous imbalance and when they go into skin the cat work, a lot of stretching on the bicep occurs. So if they're not careful, if they're not an appropriate level of mobility then the bicep can tear.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: And unfortunately in the last probably in the last year I've run into two people that are strong people too. You know, it wasn't like they were weak, they were couch potato, they came in and they just thought oh my god these were people who are strong and have been training. They just hadn't done things in the correct order. They hadn't realized their biceps were that tight. And the you know, they popped the bicep. So definitely some you know, skin the cat, done correctly with the right athlete wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

[1:05:08]

Robb Wolf: Yeah they're amazing for me and --

Chris Sommer: Yes.

Robb Wolf: --not that I try to – particularly in jits like I tap early and often but when people are going for Kimora on me when I'm doing a half guard transition. It buys me- people need to really have that thing perfectly set up because they're used to folks with really, really tight shoulders and so not that I really try to rely on you know, wiggling my way out of a bad position because I've done that.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: Twice and it ends up --

Chris Sommer: Sometimes you get away with it

Robb Wolf: But you know, what I've found is that people are habitually sloppy in how they apply that because for most shoulders that's enough because anything where the shoulder is in that 90-degree position with the body internal rotation starting the head behind the body anything going that direction is going to lock the person up and they're done. But I don't even have nearly as good a shoulder mobility as your athletes do, which I think that that ability to have the --you know, the hands more or less at shoulder width and go frontwards and backwards with the dowel that's probably like normal human shoulder mobility. So when you start dealing with even just marginally healthy shoulders one it buys me a big margin of error on injury but also folks that are used to getting that half-guard Kimora on somebody I'm able to use that as a little bit of a bait because they'll go for it and then I have a really, really slick kind of hip out deal that I do. And so I'm not using it.

You know, if somebody gets it locked up pretty good, then I tap and I'm done but I'll actually use it as a little bit of a bait because folks are not careful enough on that.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: I'm able to kind of you know, turn the corner and then that Kimora attempt goes for nothing so. Yeah, yeah it's interesting.

Chris Sommer: I like that. I would like people to kind of kick this around if they would is that a lot of shoulder issues aren't specifically the shoulder itself but a lot of them are the bicep where it comes up into the shoulder.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum. Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: So that's where the issue with that skin the cat comes from is they're thinking you know, my shoulders are tight. I also think that's now that I'm thinking about it the guys I'm seeing who are crazy, crazy strong with no shoulder extension is that their biceps are just concrete.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

Chris Sommer: They are crazy strong guys but they're standing and their hands you know, are almost out to their sides.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: Almost looks like they're standing in a cross. They might be 30 degrees back but they're definitely not hands together and it's just because they're so –now I remember any time that we have that degree of tightness right, that's an area that's at risk.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: That's an area that's at risk so that's something we definitely want to get into. He asked specifically about John's shoulder, you know, worldclass, worldclass level 2 Olympics. John's hoping to make a third. One of them was from ring strength. They didn't do the same protocol that we do, very, very strong. What we see sometimes and my suspicion is that could that particular one had been prevented? I believe so but I certainly don't want to speak for John and his coach. They're both excellent at what they do. Does it hurt to have mobility, more mobility? No. Absolutely not.

One of John's was just a crash on parallel bars. He just happened to come down in the exact wrong place the surgeon told him that they said it's just one of those freak things. So but you know, at a world class level you're willing to pay a heftier price than we as guys going about our daily lives trying to get stronger and build some quality of life. We don't have to push as hard.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Chris Sommer: We don't have to do 30, 40 hours of training a week. We're not traveling around the world going head to head, head to head and we're not doing it per year after year after year after year. you know, we can take these off when we need to. We can rest when we need to. We have that luxury that athletes at that level representative of the United States they don't always have that choice.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. Well coach we could go on forever but I have both a full bladder and another call coming up.

Chris Sommer: Oh.

Robb Wolf: So.

Chris Sommer: Not a problem. Now real quick I'm going to flip the tables on you quick.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Chris Sommer: So some guys Robb obviously genius at nutrition. So Robb for our people just some – we talked for an hour prior to the podcast. Guys that's why Robb has to bail now because I monopolized your time.

Robb Wolf: [Laughs]

Chris Sommer: For myself. But Robb you know, nutrition 101 they want to do the right thing. We did it all at time. Our nutrition forum on our section of our forum is like the wild, wild west. So just kind of a primer for them to kind of get started right.

[1:10:29]

Robb Wolf: Oh man and nutrition is the wild west. I --

Chris Sommer: I'm afraid to go in there.

Robb Wolf: I'm afraid to go in there too. I think I still have a theoretically I'm like admin on there or something. I don't even go on on my own forum. You know, on the biggies that I see like so Zoe is going to beginning gymnastics program and I see all these young kids down there working out working real hard and I see lots of Gatorade, lots of sodas, lots of juice. I know that these kids put in a lot of hours but I would really – this is my crazy used car salesman pitch is that I would really prefer to see water and a piece of fruit for snacks. You know, bring some jerky, bring some nuts, bring some fruit and you know, hammer down a banana, hammer down an apple, drink some water. The liquid carbohydrate seems to be really just bad in general. Now again we have certain athletes like we have people who are spending three hours a week on a bicycle and they're trying to train at a high level and that I'll have those people howling at me and they're like how am I supposed to do this without that. Okay I get it. You know, gymnastics is different in that it's more of a burst rest type of training. I think that you probably do benefit from having some you know, again to coach Sommer's point adequate muscle glycogen but I don't know that we need to be tackling it like a thirty, forty hour a week endurance athlete. Like we don't need to top those glycogen stores off every five minutes.

And that's probably the biggest spot that I would leap in at you know, is remove --

Chris Sommer: Yeah.

Robb Wolf: -- the bulk of the liquid carbohydrates, focus on real food. I know you know, it's hard to pack things along to get some jerky, get some nuts, have a bunch of fruit, take a minute to eat some fruit, you know, it will digest quickly. You should be fine with that. May be you don't go crazy on that when you're doing a ton of floor routines and you're liable to spew everywhere but.

Chris Sommer: I wasn't thinking specifically for our athletes.

Robb Wolf: Uh-hum.

Chris Sommer: I'm thinking specifically more for our adult population that's doing GST.

Robb Wolf: But probably same deal.

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: Probably same deal.

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: And you know, from there then what I like a next layer is just trying for 30/60/90 days try and go gluten free as a baseline.

Chris Sommer: Oh yeah.

Robb Wolf: Like that just seems to be some of this low hanging fruit that is absolutely amazing with regards to benefit. I'm not particularly good looking, I'm not particularly smart. My book keep selling really, really well and it's mainly wrapped into this idea of gut health and probably the biggest driver in that gut health is avoiding gluten. And --

Chris Sommer: Okay.

Robb Wolf: You know, and then from there actually shifting gears out of food and really focusing on sleep. Like making sleep an absolute life priority. Get to bed earlier, try to wake up without an alarm clock. I know it's really, really hard. We have kids, other people have kids. They have jobs all that stuff but.

Chris Sommer: Uh-hum.

Robb Wolf: To the degree that you can prioritize your sleep, go to bed earlier and make your room pitch black, try not to look at iPhones and iPads and TV before you go to bed. If you do get yourself a pair of red gaming glasses so that we cut out the blue and green wavelengths of light so that you actually make melatonin.

Chris Sommer: I found something you might like that we use on the laptop called flux.

Robb Wolf: Yes.

Chris Sommer: Flux.

Robb Wolf: Yup, yup.

Chris Sommer: Okay. And it changes the color of the screen for that more of an orangey tint.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. And the bugger you have to like jail break your iPhone if you run with an iPhone, I have to jail break the iPhone to get flux to work on it. I don't think there's a --

Chris Sommer: Yeah I found it for that yeah, the iOS

Robb Wolf: Yeah. And so many people end up using tablets and smart phones in bed. Leave that stuff out of your room for the love of god. Like you spend all day on it. So take a couple of minutes, wait it from that. But you know, real simple nutrition piece, have a hunk of protein at every meal. Remove liquid carbohydrates. Try tinkering with gluten free and then from there move on --

Chris Sommer: Veggies.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Yeah. I mean lots of veggies, lots of fruit, try to get your primary carbs from fruits and veggies and white rice if you do well with that. But really again if folks focus on gluten free. Focus on a hunk of protein at every meal as a minimum buy-in. They just get a lot of benefit from that.

Chris Sommer: So that simple?

Robb Wolf: Yeah it's that simple and very, very powerful, very immediate success that folks will have as far as leaning out improving you know, any type of inflammatory situation, like really great with that. And then focus on that lifestyle piece of sleep.

[1:15:25]

Even on the food guide, I end up talking more about sleep and you know, I've been talking about sleep as long as I've been talking about food. In a lot of ways I wish that I had been a sleep expert and not food expert. Because once you start talking about all the underlying issues with sleep, one there's not all the religious kind of connotations that go around food. But once you would talk about everything that's involved with sleep, and that ranges from digestive health to inflammation, you know, all these other stories --

Chris Sommer: We're like from sleep.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yeah from sleep and then the food piece plugs into that beautifully and you're like oh when we're talking about inflammation and gut health then you need to look at diet like ABCD. And the sleep piece is kind of the skinny end of the wedge to get people thinking about the whole story in a way that then we introduce the food piece it's like oh I get it. This makes sense when we look at it from the perspective of sleep. If people are already brought in on the sleep piece, then we get less of a religious kneejerk reaction when we start talking about the food piece.

Chris Sommer: Okay. Now Robb, am I remembering that there's some startup guides in that to help my crew get a jump on some of the nutrition stuff?

Robb Wolf: Yeah. If folks go to RobbWolf.com then we have the 30-day meal plan, shopping and food guides. We have trouble shooting kind of a flow charts depending on if you're a strength athlete or an endurance athlete or if you're just you know, you feel like you're overweight and you're trying to lean out. We have some great flow charts that help you walk through that process to trouble shoot your individual needs and that's all totally for free at RobbWolf.com.

Chris Sommer: It's all there. All right. perfect, perfect.

Robb Wolf: Awesome. Well like usual we're able to -- we've got the gift of gab when we get together. So we'll you know, when is your Rhode Island seminar?

Chris Sommer: Excellent. We are going to be at Poliquin headquarters in Rhode Island next weekend actually.

Robb Wolf: Okay, okay.

Chris Sommer: Then we've got what's coming up? We've got a pretty large seminar out in San Diego the following weekend. I want to say the 18th and 19th of

October. Something else here. And then I head out to Australia in November for two or three stops.

Robb Wolf: Awesome. Okay. Well I know Mat Lalonde is I'm pretty sure going to be at your Rhode Island gig. Let's think about getting together at the first of the year after Mat's had a chunk of time to work on the material that --

Chris Sommer: Right.

Robb Wolf: -- he learns at the seminar and then all three of us will get together and talk food, sleep, exercise but specifically gymnastics bodies' training and how Matt ends up incorporating that into his program.

Chris Sommer: I love it. Yeah it's too bad we -- guys we spoke for an hour on nutrition before we started this so I'm sure we recorded that one --

Robb Wolf: We just recorded that one yeah. Yeah.

Chris Sommer: That one is pretty sleek.

Robb Wolf: Yeah, yup. We covered all kinds of stuff, gut health, gut biome, and it was some great stuff. Well coach you -- I mean this sincerely, you've been an incredible friend to me. You've stood by me through some very, very rough times in my life and incredibly indebted to your friendship and your continued support and really excited to see the success and the health that you're bringing to the world by getting this gymnastics bodies material out there.

Chris Sommer: I appreciate that buddy. I feel exactly the same. You're doing great stuff.

Robb Wolf: Thank you. Well Coach Sommer if you have not checked out his website, check out gymnasticsbodies.com. Please check out the foundation series. You really owe it to yourself even if you're not familiar with that material. It's very -- I won't -- it's accessible. I will not say it's easy but it's very accessible. So it's --

Chris Sommer: Try to scale it. But we also want to hold them accountable and give them enough time you know, to get some results cranking.

Robb Wolf: Right, right. So I recommend that everybody check that out and Coach looking forward to having you on again.

Chris Sommer: Looking forward to it myself Robb.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Safe travel and we'll talk to you soon.

Chris Sommer: All right. Buddy, you too.

Robb Wolf: Bye Coach.

Chris Sommer: Bye.

[1:19:32] End of Audio