

## Paleo Solution - 328

[00:00:00]

Robb Wolf:

Hey folks 6 listeners can't be wrong. This is Robb Wolf another edition to the Paleo Solution podcast. Today, I have one of my very good friends Jeff Tucker. You guys probably all know him as the cross-fit gymnastics coach. I've known Jeff for a ton of years now. He's had me out to his place numerous times for seminars, hanging out. We've eaten barbeque, we drank NorCal margaritas together and he is just a righteous dude. Jeff how are you doing?

Jeff Tucker:

I'm doing awesome and it's great to be here Robb.

Robb Wolf:

Oh, I've been really looking forward to this. We had to shift gears a little bit yesterday because I've had a little bit of a little bit of a book editing deadline madness and so I apologize for that. But Jeff give folks your background. You've done a ton of stuff. You've basically lived about 5 different lives and you continue rolling out new lives. Like we're going to talk about your coaching history, work history a little bit, talk about the Crossfit gymnastic stuff.

But then more recently you've been doing a little bit of homesteading and I definitely want to get in to that. Because it kind of parlays in to my interest in sustainability. But give folks some of your big picture background.

Jeff Tucker:

Yeah sure. I mean a lot of people know, and some don't but I started off as my father was a fire fighter for 33years. And I grew up within you know that family if you will and it literally cut my teeth on civil service and so that's all kind of really had as my true north when as I was a kid. And I'm really glad of that because I think it pushed me in a great direction.

But I became a fire fighter as a young man 19 years old with the Fort Worth Fire Service and I worked for them for about 20 years and then at that time I did all of, a myriad of things. I gosh handled rescued stuff and HazMat stuff. And then I obviously fire operations and I became an arson bomb investigator during my tenure there. So I investigated fires and got my bomb training through FBI and did that for a while.

And then you know as I got in to that 20-year marking, I really decided there was something more for me out there. I've always been kind of a serial entrepreneur on my days off. The job kind of affords you the lifestyle you know basically you're on duty 10 days a month. So that gives

you a lot of time to create something. So I turned my head in a lot of different things from gosh building houses, painting houses you know? Whatever would turn a buck.

And then I just thought I would really at that point I wanted to really do something different. So I went back to college to get my PhD in history because I thought I wanted to pontificate historical facts in to young minds. And after being through the grad school deal, it was really depressing to me to watch academics, grown men and women act like 4<sup>th</sup> graders. And then I really realized that I maybe didn't have the patience to really talk to the young minds of today. [laughs]

So I basically I was at Texas Christian University and I was also over there working in the academic athletic advisory position for several teams. And I was coaching an intermittent gymnastic class and I was coaching the cheerleading squads there too.

So anyway, all that kind of turned in to somebody saw me coaching one day doing some privates. And he said you know you really ought to open a gym and do this, you're good at it. And I at that point just decided you know I think I want to be a businessman. And so I kind of left my original thought there on TCU of being a historian per se and then open a small 16 hundred square foot shop and started teaching basic tumbling and gymnastic skills to anybody who wanted to come through the door.

And it grew on to what of course you said in the intro you had come down to do some seminars way back. And we have built GSX at that time, GSX Athletics which was a mutli...

Robb Wolf: Monster facility, yeah.

Jeff Tucker: It was monstrous to me. Biggest fucking check I've ever written in my life. I'm still paying for it, but yeah it was a big sham and we were trying to do a multitude of things from taekwondo. It was all about movement you know?

We had a little rock climbing wall, we had tumbling pits, we had trampolines. And you know we did gymnastics, tumbling, and cheer leading then we had a spot out back where we would work in some support movement whether it would be just development athletically or looking at doing things like baseball or track so.

Just whatever we could help somebody is what we did. We just kind of opened the door and it was fascinating to see it just grow. It was really nuts and then about 6 months in, I found an old farming buddy told me about Crossfit and I found out and I was really kind of impressed with it just because obviously the gymnastic component. That's what really was my bias and sung to me the most. And it was a unique methodology and it was obviously a very large different way of thinking about what is movement,

[00:05:21]

But yeah so that turned into this gig I have today and it's now been almost a decade later. I'm just fuck, where'd the time go? It's nuts.

Robb Wolf: It reminds me of that line out of, that scene of the "Grosse Pointe Blank," where Martin Blank just hooked up with Pivens and they're like so what have you been doing man and then Pivens just freaks out and he's like 10 years, 10 years man, you know and yeah it goes by fast.

Jeff Tucker: It does.

Robb Wolf: Nose to grindstone keeping that brick and mortar operation going. And then if you also were doing seminars on the road and stuff like that in addition running a brick and mortar facility like, then these silly things called weekends basically disappear and then 1 year rolls in to another year rather quickly and it just goes by in a blink.

Jeff Tucker: It was nuts you know? I remember my oldest daughter was pretty young at the time. I mean she was 12, 13 I think and she was really concerned because I told her, we kind of sat down as a family and I said look I need a year and I need you guys to give me a year. Because I want to develop this seminar my way because we've been given the provincial nod by Greg to take over and do the seminars and so. I remember her standing there with huge tears in her eyes and a trembling lip just like you know, "This is going to change everything, were never going to see you again. "

And you want to talk about your heart being pulled out of your chest. You know I saw a little picture you posted the other day with your kids and I think the best way to put it is my grandfather said you know they step all over your toes when they were little and all over your heart and as they get older and they do, and thank God they do.

But it's just, it was so hard to try to convince my oldest like look I'm still going to be here.

Robb Wolf: This is a good thing really.

Jeff Tucker: And I was so wrong.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: I feel as if I lied to her you know? But I mean there was a good, it wasn't 1 year, it was 2 years and it kept on exploding. And of course we were... I mean we added our own panache and style to it obviously but it for right or wrong. But it turned into this thing where gosh at the gym you know what I had been doing was basically morning in, evening out, you know I'd get home at 9 o'clock. And Tracy would have all the kids tucked in bed and I'd kiss them goodnight and tell them I love them and then see them the next night and go to sleep. And that went on for 6 days a week because we were open 6 days a week and then I had to build a staff that helped run the gym and go do the seminar.

Man, I look back in it now and I don't know how the hell we juggled the number of pins that I had thrown in a year at that time but of course...

Robb Wolf: Because if you knew starting what you know it later you're like okay, I'm not going to do this, but...

Jeff Tucker: Yeah, you know and I do. I think about that. I think about I would never do this again but God where it ended up is just where I ultimately wanted it to be. So it was worth the for me personally it was worth the time and the headache. And it's turned in to you know where I'm at now and of course, I think I've done a lot to guide the ship that way which has made me feel very proud of being able to steer this the boat into proper shoals and shores you know?

But I tell you what man, it was a fucking grind, I thought working out at the gym was hard. I didn't realize what traveling was going to really be.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: And we were only doing, gosh in the beginning Robb if I had 2 courses a month, I was pumped you know? I mean remember talking with Mike Birder and a thing going can you believe this?

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Jeff Tucker: An then it turned in to you know 4 a month and then I was doing 1 in the middle of the week at military bases and you know. I looked at then number of logs milled in a couple of years and then I realized were never

going to be able to keep up with the demand, I mean now we're doing... Back then I think the most I did by myself as a lead coach and getting an assistant every now and then and I was 48 courses in a year and that's a lot.

Robb Wolf: Wow, wow.

Jeff Tucker: That's every weekend but we also had some you know we obviously didn't do weekends. I had to go to military bases in the middle of the week just because it was available and that was the year that I said no more of this. It also happened to be the year that I got asked to see if we could break a hundred courses for the year and I was like how the hell am I going to do this?

So I started developing a really good staff and a that enabled us to do now. Like we were on track, I think to maybe hit 120 courses this year.

**[00:10:01]**

Robb Wolf: Wow that's phenomenal.

Jeff Tucker: That's nuts.

Robb Wolf: You know Jeff, you know, I know we ran a gym for 10 years. My brother and sister-in-law took that over and they've done a fantastic job but developing staff is a bear.

Jeff Tucker: Yup.

Robb Wolf: The fitness industry is interesting in that people are pretty transient figuring how to incentivize people to stick around and do what they need to do. It's kind of an interesting thing where most of the folks that want to do training are not particularly entrepreneurial.

So you try to incentivize money and that kind of, sort of works or you get the 1 person that is pretty entrepreneurial and then they end up splitting town and taking half of your folks with them. How did you develop a staff and clearly it's probably a little bit different talking about the gymnastic seminar versus the brick and mortar facility.

But how did you go out finding people? Like what qualities in these people did you see that you started finding something that was consistent or was it very much of a one-off deal every single time? You just had to either explore each person and see what the merits were?

Jeff Tucker: You just had to ask a hard question didn't you?

Robb Wolf: Like I'm still trying to figure that out so.

Jeff Tucker: Well yeah and I am you know? I guess let me say this first, I would break this up in to 2 different sections. Because the brick and mortar is entirely different than the seminar. So let me put the seminar aside for a moment. The brick and mortar thing, a lot of it was trial and error for me in the beginning. And I even think up toward the end I still continued to make frankly bad decisions. I also look back at my 40-year-old something self at that time and I've realized man, I have learned so much only about people but myself.

And I think a lot of the decisions that I made, especially off of those emotion and control just because I was holding on so tight to making the business work fed into I think poor decision making. So you know if I could write any kind of novella on that, you'd probably find that it would be more about myself than "Hey, here's the perfect way to hire an employee" because I read those books too and they're fucking wrong.

And you know and not that broad stroking it. But you can glean some material out of there. But I don't ever think that there's a magic bullet per se for every group of individuals that are going to walk in your door wanting a job. You've got different types of people that walk in there just wanting something. They're never going to tell you what they want until they expose it. You've got others that come in there that man, they just need to make some money. I mean we've hired the 18-year-old fresh out of high school who just lessons hard, he had absolutely no life experience a lot of 1, 2 never could really complete tasks. Didn't know what a flathead screwdriver was, you know, to how to talk to people when they walked in the door to say, "Hey, what is this place you know?"

So there's all this investment that you put into these individuals from that level even to the once that have the experience. Because their experience or who has taught them or mentored them is still going to carry over when it walks in to your gym. And you may like the mentorship they had or you may not. So I really...if I was to do this all over again starting today, I would build a brick and mortar facility that only would house a certain specific amount of clientele. Let's just call it a hundred, that all I need is a hundred to make my nut be happy and do what I'm passionate about.

Because I've done it the opposite direction where I'm pulling in 90,000 a month gross and at the end of it, you go wow we're making a shit load of

dollars but why is it that my bank account only has dividends of 1500 bucks in it after I just brought in 90,000...

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: And true story, and it's because I started looking at all that money going out to cover that mass number of clients we had there and the mass number of programs we had. And we couldn't raise prices, shit we were pretty high on prices. You know and then we've had people walk in there and they've done tremendous job and they're like you know? I can do this.

Well they literally, I'll tell you something, I was on the tractor 1 day, and I had a kid that I had known for a long time. Good gymnast, great coach, and he'd come to work for us and he'd been there kind of at the beginning. And it worked for us for several years and probably the highest paid part-time guy I had ever seen making more than level entry at TCU for a secretary or an assistant.

[00:15:00]

And so we left on bad terms, you know? He decided he wanted to go do his own thing. Didn't like the way I was doing and stuff and I'm like okay well you know, it's certainly your right, I wish you well. I said you got my condolences and my blessing. Because I knew what he was about to step into.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: And I'm literally down on the tractor clearing out a food plot for deer and I get this message on my email that I got an email and I pulled over and looked at it. And I came up to the house and called the guy you know and I said man, you will not know what this letter meant to me. And it was frankly a well written response to I'm sorry for the 20-year-old that I was you know? You really did this, you really did that. I can't believe you juggled all of us and all of our attitudes and all of our immaturity and I just want to thank you. Now, and that meant more to me than any pay check that I've ever gotten.

Robb Wolf: That's huge.

Jeff Tucker: And it is huge you know and because then all of a sudden I thought okay, you know? I'm not crazy, you know? But it doesn't mean that I got everything right I mean we tried to do a vetting process but damn it like everybody else, have you not Rob just not hired some body because damn it you need a body and you're desperate?

Robb Wolf: We've done that a time or 2. They had a pulse and that was it.

Jeff Tucker: Yeah, so that happens too. So I've hired. I think I've done everything right and everything wrong when it gets into that process, but I do think that we had a pretty continual set of loyalty with staff. And I've even have some staff still working with me today from the very early days in GSX that are now in our seminar.

The biggest difference in the seminar versus the day in, day out brick and mortar place is you've got to be so hands on, on the brick and mortar. Because your basically on every waking second that you're there that's there's an individual there who's your supposed to be offering them service right?

And I do think that also part of what works against that type of business is that It's so intimate and that intimacy has got an interesting line that constantly gets moved and crossed as to when this business and when. You know, when are you my friend and when are you the owner, when am I your friend? When am I allowed to bitch and what can I bitch about?

And evidently that seems to be everything on the planet when it comes to the gym and their relationship that you've got there with your clients. It's not like any other business that I have ever run, as far as a brick and mortar place. I mean it's just fascinating to me.

I had a guy one time, regionals was just starting back up and it was our second regionals to do there back when regionals was really small. But it was big to us at that time and I was doing a bunch of welding and putting some things together and these guys came out to me and said, "hey really nice to see you around."

Of course, I've been travelling around the seminars about a bit too and I'm like well thanks you know. I mean I could tell he was kind of taken a shy. He said, "Well, you know, you're just not here a lot." And I said, "Well, I'm here all the time, I'm putting in like 60 hours, what are you talking about?"

He says "I'd love it if you come buy and work out with us." You're just a convenient owner is what you are. You're an absentee owner and then I got pissed and I just said you know what I said be sure to let me know your schedule for the entire week so I can fucking be here when you work out.



Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: And you know he's not there when I'm there at 6 am cleaning up the toilets or crap left on the floor, vacuuming you know? Because the other guy didn't do it as well as it should have been done. And it just really...you know, this is when I realized maybe this is not going to be the mecca dream I've always thought of.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Jeff Tucker: It's a tough business man and I've seen people who, I think a lot of it has to deal with the passion in to it, how much of themselves are they willing and can give to their business, their clients, you know every day, every second. And sometimes I look at people and they're like a shell of what they were formally and I see others as like I don't know what meds you're taking but Jesus Christ I think I want some of that.

Robb Wolf: I want some of that, yeah, yeah.

Jeff Tucker: So I'm not perfect by any means, I think we did it pretty well. We didn't have to, I don't think we had to have a lot of firings you know? We've had people that would leave in their own accord like you said to go run their own gig and you know some of them tried to dig it out. You know? Some of them became competitors with us and you know? I realized that what made me feel good about that is you know shit Fort Worth has a population of 400,000 or 500,000 people. all I want is a couple of hundred of them you know?

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Jeff Tucker: I don't know if I answered your damn question.

Robb Wolf: No, you did and you sparked thing that I've noodled on a long time. Early, early on Coach Glassman always couched this thing as a you should be a sole prop, have a couple of support staff so you can take a weekend off or a week off here and there and kind of keep the wheels either rolling you know so that you're not always there.

But I had these grandiose ideas that having a bunch of staff and you know paying them a professional wage and everything. You know staff at NorCal today, like I want to put a low jack on those people like I don't want them to go anywhere. They're absolutely amazing but it's still a lot of work to manage and keep all those folks happy. And I don't know if Greg knew this already or if it's another one of these things where he

somewhat stumbled on to it through you know some luck and some back door genius.

[00:20:42]

But that idea of a sole prop, a little bit of support staff of passionate people. But you know they're probably mainly going to be part-timers, you know maybe get a hundred maybe up to 100, 120 may be up to a 150 people and that's it.

And if you run everything well, you can make a pretty good living doing that and it's a lot of work but I mean anything is a lot of work. But if you love that community you love coaching you like learning new stuff, it's a really good gig because that running a gym is kind of interesting in that you've got an opportunity to do your Vegas floor show gig where you're up entertaining people and helping them and teaching them and coaching and everything.

And then you could do a blog. You can then may be do a podcast to kind of round out some stuff. So there's a really interesting opportunity to have a quite varied life you know? You could do a lot of different stuff.

Jeff Tucker:

Yeah and that's the thing, you know going back to I agree with you completely. I think you know if I were to do it all over again like I said earlier, it would be like give me a hundred clients. I'm the only guy that's going to be a lead coach here and you know. And obviously you would need some assistance from time to time and I think you can develop that in many ways.

But where they're tired out from experience or mentored through until they've reached the level of competency that you feel should be there to get that break. But I think no matter what, you got to really love doing this and if you're getting into it for the money, you're fucked. You know I don't believe that's the reason to do really anything but I think especially in that business because the rewards don't just come through financial gain. Although it could happen but that's going to take time.

You know what's funny, our gym GSX I remember when I first brought CrossFit there had 2 guys that I leaned on pretty hard on assistants. And one of them was a small percentage partner and then in that time and then I said what do you guys think of this and they laughed. I mean...

No way in hell you're bringing this in here you know? And I'm like wait a minute. I kept on trying to convince them and I finally just said fuck it this is happening, you know I mean. I said we had, of course you remember that we had a really small box at that time. The gym itself was larger but

where we were doing the Crossfit was rather tight. But back then that was just fucking normal or you'd go outside or...

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Jeff Tucker: I always saw the facility as we could multiply use it in different ways. But I had about \$80,000 worth of the best side equipment out of the personal studio, just had a desk on it when I bought it, you know? And we were putting it on there and we were like mom's fitness while their daughters were working out right?

So I sold all of that and me and I made my dad just started welding platforms and made our own GHD's and welded our pull-up bar and that shit was fun to me. And then it was really fun to watch them work out on it.

So that community part of it was just so badass to me. It was camaraderie that I enjoyed. I think that gets a little fucked up for different reasons down the road because you do become so close with these people and they forget that I'm the owner and that I'm a for profit business. And those things are interesting. I feel like have more issues with that than I did with employees.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: If I were to really look back what gave me the most consternation but again I would keep it more on a smaller route. And also let people know hey we are a for profit business and we make no apologies about it and there's always options. You have options, you don't have to be here.

Robb Wolf: Most folks have a garage or a back deck that they can set-up their squat stand and build an Olympic platform and hang some rings. You know if you want coaching in a community then you've got a pay enough to keep the lights on and the bills paid to make that thing go so yeah.

Jeff Tucker: All right, but I think that's a, you know as far as a seminar side is what's cool about it is we were able to develop staff globally just do to travel. Because you'd always have people who would come up to you and be a part of what you're doing and always took that as a massive compliment.

And I always tried and I think I had a pretty good track record of this of at least giving them exposure to that. I think maybe where I sucked at it because I'm so soft hearted is that it was hard for me to tell people no. Like hey you're really not meshing where we need to here.

[00:25:11]

So if I would be self-critical of my foible there, it would be that I had to learn to not just be a coach in that respect. But realize that anything that anybody does, under our name is obviously going to affect our brand and our name and our registration. So I had to really kind of to bone up that as well, and read a lot of books and some of them were right and some of them were bullshit, you know?

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: But my gut always is kind of what I followed and we've developed some people out of it and I've always... I think where I got to make the best decision in the seminar part was to let everyone know upfront this is not your fulltime job.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: This will never be your fulltime job. I mean I've told every one of them that. Now that doesn't mean that they didn't look at you with those wonderful big cat eyes and go I'm ready for this to be my fulltime job.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: But I just said nope. I mean I was able to steadfast with that and say no, you need to understand this was something that you need to do because you love it. It's fine and I know, I get all the rewards because there are great dividends that come in that from feedback and interaction and things that are way beyond the monetary part.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: But that's where I got to have fun with staff and that's where I got to develop some great... Frankly we've got an incredible group of leads and you know, it's embarrassing to think that I'm sat and interviewed Olympians you know? I'm just like what? And how is this happening,

Robb Wolfe: Right.

Jeff Tucker: You know? Jen Smith Competed in 96' for her country Australia here in the US and we've become great friends and she's got a great story. I mean you're talking about a burned out gymnast, are mentally and physically beaten down by coaches.

We had some great conversations about that. And she was hesitant to come and be a part of our seminar because of her bad experience or some of the bad experiences. Because not all of it was bad, but some of the bad experiences and being an elite gymnast.

And it was great. I got to sit out here at the ranch and talk with her. And also pay homage to her. I said, you know, you are what I always wanted to be as a young gymnast. I mean all of you, you know her training methodology's incredible, she's also a boxer. She's really easy on the eyes and she's a solid athlete, and she knows her craft you know? She knows her stuff. But it was great to have... I mean that 1 experience alone would be all the reason I need in the world to do what I've done you know? That was a great thing and I've had thousands of those moments through,

Robb Wolfe: Right.

Jeff Tucker: So it's been cool.

Robb Wolfe: You know it's interesting to me that your background was what I would call and correct if me if I'm wrong here but more applied gymnastics and that you were focusing on, you know, tumbling as a modality for athletic development and cheer leading and whatnot. And not necessarily producing gymnasts specifically. And that seemed to mesh really well with this over all kind of CrossFit ethos of a generalist but pulling from these sub-disciplines to develop the more rounded athlete. What do you think about that? Like do you see how you know potentially that that's a good meshing of gears?

Jeff Tucker: Well that was the plan, I mean I was a, I'm a failed gymnast. I was a competitive gymnast and competed in gymnastics and my career ended when I was 16. I rolled over in a dune buggy and latex home and literally broke every rib in one side of the body and screwed up, collapsed lung.

You know back then the doctors just go like okay, rest awhile. Don't you know and I was bull shit proof man. I was in the best shape of my life. Hell even for that matter they even missed that I had had 2 compression fractures in midthoracic when they did the original x-rays on me. I mean I was fucked up.

And but yet you know what I saw as gymnastic has and I had used gymnastics. Now after I had healed, I basically had another year left in high school. I obviously... you know, I felt like any prospects I had going forward in college were like fuck college. I don't want to do that, I can't do gymnastics anymore.

I've lost my one true thing that was me, you know? And so I just started kind of going to UTA and secretly sneaking in the gym because they had gymnastics equipment. And sometimes over in TCU because they still had in the head teams. And I got back in shape for the fire department so that's how I used it. And so to me, my mindset has always been, look if you can just move. Who gives a shit that it's high and elitist gymnastic quality? Because frankly none of us in CrossFit are being judged Where I think the USGA or the United States Gymnasium Federation has missed above for many years. Is that they've kept those gymnastic blinders on and if not been able to see that the novice can do advanced movement.

Robb Wolf: And they want to. I am shocked. My wife and I went in to all the gymnastics places here in Reno when we moved here. We're kind of like, "Hey, do you guys have an adult gymnastics program?" They were kind of like, "Okay, what type of pedophile are you? You brought your wife with you?"

[laughter]

It's like no man, I just want to learn.

Jeff Tucker: And like your arms are shaven [laughing]. Yeah.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. I think you want to learn how to swing on the parallel bars. Do some tumbling and you know, get some coaching on these stuff that I'm interested in. A little bit of a capoeira background. A couple of adult gymnastics classes up in Seattle really lit my fire for that stuff. It's been really hard to find anybody interested in doing that. I guess these gymnastics places, financially, do well enough just simply focusing on the kids. Nobody has really put a ton of thought into developing the novice adult to the best ability.

Jeff Tucker: Yeah and there's lots of reasons for that. I mean a few of them would be...first off, there's not any money in it for them. Because if you look at... I say that in a great way because they've got to what? They got to keep the damn doors open. So when you look at four or 400 or 500 or 600 or 700 clients which are all children, everything is setup on that progression programming towards a competitive or hobby. I mean they still do hobby gymnastics. They just realized. Hey we're going to teach your kids gymnastics. But we understand that they're not going to be on a competitive level to elite, to national. To what have you.

So that's a system. I mean it's a cookie cutter system that has existed globally for, you know, hell a century. So it's one of those things that we literally have a way of going about it. That was the difference in our gym.

Is that I'd have a CrossFitter walk in. It's like, "Can I use your trampolines? Can you teach me a back tuck? Can you teach me a fruit punch?" I mean on and on and on. It was an open source essentially. Some of it was private training. Some of it, we worked into the CrossFit classes.

I think that's where I was able to use as our little gym as a lab to play with, how are we going to put this syllabus together for CrossFit gymnastics? How am I going to teach adults specific movement? Why do I think these movements are key? Why would anybody need to know to do their cartwheel? Where can I put in tumbling? Where can I put in a front lever or back lever?

Yeah. But getting back to the gymnastic clubs, there's not any money in it for them. Their insurance doesn't cover it. Adults are basically just really stupid, clumsy cats who have to be really molded. You got to put a lot of work into an adult who has no background in that type of movement versus the kid who's been starting at age three and four, who has all of this now and both muscle memory. There's no fear factor, especially if they've been coached well. They've got these wonderful skills.

What I loved to work with is obviously the post gymnast who maybe hadn't done it in a while but shit. You can look at their hand stand and go, "Well I don't have to correct any of that. They're inverted. They're stacked properly. They're hollowed out. Their legs are together, toes pointed versus the hobbyist which is like, "Jesus Christ, I'm going to be here a while. You know?"

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: So there's a lot too. You don't just walk in. Even in our seminar where I've been so truthful with everyone and get my staff to be. It's like look, "Let me tell you some things we can't do from the get go." I can't make a gymnast out of you in 16 hours. I can't make a gymnastics coach out of you in 16 hours. So why the fuck are you here is what you're asking yourself. Yet I said, "Let me tell you something." How many of you what a back lever is? We might get one out of forty raise their hand. One out of fifteen that day. Whatever it is.

I'll just say, "Okay, well, let me draw it up on the board." This what you're going to do. Then you get that look of like, "Holy shit. I'm going to do that?" Then of course questions come. Like well why would I ever want to learn to do a front and back lever? Well okay. Do you want to improve on your Olympic barbell skills? I mean would you like to have some more

upper body strength? We can show translations back and forth of where they complement each other.

So what we try to do is basically dumb down gymnastics. Make it simple. Make it easy and accessible. Not put the stretch in it. Judgment of the movement meaning that we didn't have to worry about earning points in front of a band of judges at a competition. Right? So what if you didn't quite put your toes well on it? So what if your legs were just a little bit not together?

[0:35:00]

We can cue these things and correct them. Yet still show them what we want. We want you to ultimately go toward the highest gymnastic bar movement that you can achieve. There's reasons on and on and on about why that won't, it won't happen. You know? It will or won't happen. But yeah.

When guys like you walk into a normal gymnastics studio, it's less so more now because of what's been going in the last 10 years. I think we've educated a lot of coaches, elite coaches on down. Hell, I'll tell you a story. I went to do the gymnastic congress down in California years ago. We were put on as a speaker because CrossFit was really new then. I think I was only doing the seminars for maybe a year or two. I've got put on as a guest down there. Then they moved me to the last speaker of the day. I'd thought, "Fuck, there ain't gonna be anybody in the room." I'm the last speaker. Everybody is going to be leaving because they want to get the hell out of this weekend gig." I don't mean just the last speaker of the day. The last day last speaker of the day. Who stuck around for that crap?

Well it was standing room only. There's national coaches in there. There's normal gymnastic studios who developed gymnastics in there. They all had questions. How would you fit this into our normal competition schedule? Well I wouldn't. I wouldn't tell you to necessarily replace one with the other. I would tell you to keep your competition schedule and when you're off season. Look at doing some of these things as a repetitive wad in an intensity training, you know, and Crossfit. What was fun to me was to sit here and basically say, "Have any of you swung a kettle bell?" Kettle bells is in our training. They're like well some hadn't, some had.

And I said, "Well think about a gymnast who doesn't open their hip in a full when they're turning. They've got this closed hip all that time. How would we tell them to maybe train them. Let's start swinging a kettle bell. What do we drive it with? We drive it with our hips. So maybe we get



that muscle memory and neurologic development so that it will translate back to the movement you requested from them in the air. Versus just brow beating the shit out of them and over conditioning them for as punishment. I don't know.

Robb Wolf:

No, that's awesome. That awesome. That's fascinating. What do you feel like would be...I'm thinking about this from kind of an anti-aging perspective. Like what are some just go-to items that you would like to see people develop. Like I keep coming back to this ability to do a good back bridge. Without a town of lumbar impingement that we're actually getting a lot of the movement, a lot of that arch in the thoracic spine. For a lot of people, post 30, particularly post 40 year old. That's a pretty steep thing to start going after. But I feel like the benefits that folks get from that are really profound, would you agree with that?

You know if you had just had like three to five movements that you'd like to see people chase. Kind of from mobility anti-aging perspective. What would those be?

Jeff Tucker:

Well I think I think obviously on the anti-aging thing if we're moving, we're working towards the anti-aging. So I think it's just great continue to move, workout, work hard. Do those things are going to keep us in agility. I mean because what do we lose when we get older is the ability to be agile. I think that's kind of what you're speaking to there obviously.

So if we were to take a back bend or a bridge. I mean from a gymnastic purist perspective, most of that movement for them is about opening the upper body. We just already have the development of flexion and flexibility, mobility on the lower buddy. Now I'm talking about because we start working with kids at a very early age with that whether it be on a... Of course, now they use boulders. Back in my day, we used octagons, hexagons and things like that. To start develop that movement or just self-support spotting, front walkovers, back walkovers, etc.

But if we're going to look at that from the standpoint of the individual, I mean my first kind of questions to you would be, "Well, how old is this individual?" What is their history? Want dance and offenders do they have? Just because we might see value in that bridge doesn't necessarily it means as a one size fits all from my perspective Robb. I'm a retired firefighter and I have a shitload of injuries. I've got injuries from gymnastics. I've got them from a car wreck that I've healed myself from. I've fallen through rouses of fire fighter. I'm a banged up guy. I've had a couple of operations. So I can still find ways to get upward. I can still find ways to get thoracic and show the mobility without even being I na

[0:40:00]

bridge. So if I were to do...I call this triple pose but there's lots of ways to open your shoulders where you have your hand placement on a wall.

You're in a straddle position and you just start to lower that hip or bend that and lower that chest and open those shoulders. By changing hand positions, I can continue to open the shoulders that way. If I have issues with necessarily, maybe even holding what I would consider a safe back then, well then we use a device. We get in something that we can literally lay on and start bringing our hands and feet, rocking back and forth on the floor from hand to feet with that arched body form. And then start to progress it up.

The cool thing is in any movement. Even the most basic yoga movement, take yoga. There's always going to be one. Another advanced form of whatever you're working on. Whether it be you know, if you're in a tuck plunge position. How do we make that harder? When we'll we straighten the arms. If we keep them in a bent arm position, well it's going to make it a lot easier to achieve that balance. But then what do we want to ultimately do? Well we want to go straight arm. Then we want to extend a straddle. Then we want to extend full body with legs together. And then I'm going to say, "Well make sure we get you really parallel to the ground and point your damn toes."

So it's going to be all of those wonderful things. It starts back with basics. If I were to mention that through four of them. I think a handstand is one of the most incredible things that we can do. If we can get inverted comfortably and just hang out. I Mean just literally just find balance. It doesn't matter to me if it's five seconds ten or fifteen. There's always a beginning. Then we can look at...well how do we find a different form of balance? Shoulder taps or walking on hands. Using the wall as an assistant to walk on hands. Having somebody grab your ankles and learning to walk with perfect form.

Another movement, I'd think. I'm a big fan of lever work. I love front and back levers. The back lever is a little harder to get into for people. I think it's easier to hold. The front lever is easy to get into but it's damn harder to hold. I'm talking about hitting the true movement. So those types of things, we've got very base movements that we can do in both of those that would begin towards front levers and back levers. As we work towards the true advanced movement, we can be in tuck positions. We can talk about palms down, palms up. I mean there's all types of things that we can do to make that movement harder.

Then probably the other is just, "Can you do a fucking pull-up?" Can you do a straight pull-up? And if you can, well how many can you do? Then my next thing is going to be, "Can you take that and get into what everybody in gymnastics calls it the position?" Can you get into a true hollow body form and then knockout the same set? The answer normally going to be no. Well okay, well then now let's make it harder. Get to where you can do that. It goes on and on from there.

I mean there's a limitless amount of things that we can do in gymnastics. But those would be three or four that I would just pull out of my hat. I think there's more than just three or four you should do. Gosh to find anything with balance in an isometric strength holds. I think that it works towards our advantage in so many ways. I think the stretching and mobility inflection. I think that should just be gravy on the steak so to speak. Because it's something we should always be doing. You know one thing I really kind of admired about you guys when I first met you. I noticed you guys were sitting in the back. So and so was speaking upfront. But all y'all were always doing what. You were always actually listening and being polite and quiet. But you were always stretching. You were always getting ready for the day. That told me a lot about the group that was there. So I just see the mobility piece is huge, I think. That's just basically something that we do every day.

Robb Wolf:

Right. Right. No I love it. I love it. Definitely I've found some basic gymnastics progressions plus a deadlift once a week or a power cling once a week for my Brazilian jujitsu has been amazing. I consistently hear from folks even 50-60 pounds heavier than I am. They're like, "Dude you're a handful." I'm motoring towards my purple belt. I'm getting pretty close to that. So the technical side is starting to come in. When I need to turn some attributes on. I am definitely not lacking in kind of strength and body integration. If I need to do a sweep that necessitates being hollow and scooping up under a person. And then getting a hip extension with some straight arm movement and stuff like that. I'm really pretty good at doing that now. These basic gymnastics development things like hollow rocks and superman's and rolling pins and really remedial plant to progression. It's kind of funny.

[0:45:00]

I suspect, on my death bed, I'll still have a front and a back lever. I just was able to do those for one day one. There's some other things that I'm still chasing on there. But it's interesting how profoundly that has transferred over to my Brazilian jujitsu. Also, how much better my body feels when I do all that when I have that strength, work and the mobility all kind of baked in the cake at the same time.

Jeff Tucker: Yeah. I think you you're going to find better recovery in that as well. Obviously, I mean you're a food guru so you know how to feed your body properly.

Robb Wolf: Theoretically yeah. It's always farting around with that but yeah.

Jeff Tucker: I do. I think especially in what you're talking about. Look how explosive Brazilian jujitsu can be. Look how much mobility is needed in that. Think about things like connective tissues. That's kind of one of the things that it can be a blessing and a curse to not have development. That's one big thing for me. I don't want to go fast. What I want to do is to strengthen form. If then if our goal is speed, then let's add the speed component. But after you showed me form and strength development. Right? Those things are very important to me. You've got to show me you know how to get in this particular form. Are you strong enough to hold it in the degree? Are disadvantageous leverage that is being created whatever movement we're doing. If you can show me those things with consistency. We are going to develop that connective tissue. Those small muscle letting up and then the large muscle. We are going to develop large muscles. You ever see anybody that's hanging on a bar. You tell them to get active in their shoulder curl. Then they have no fucking clue what you're talking about. They do something stupid like sucking their gut. They don't even engage lat and delts. Those types of things, we try to break all of it down. Even in your sport of BJJ, I can guarantee you there's some moments where your...don't you think you're in some isometric poses that you're having to hold for a little bit. That's the beauty of a hollow rock or a hollow hole. I mean If we can make it where it's just fired into our neurologic pathways and muscle memory then we are going to be all that much stronger. I think take a little bit more abuse on the mat then the individual who doesn't work to the skills.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. I've definitely liked lifting weights at various points in my life. I was the state powerlifting champion. For me personally...again like a dead lift or maybe a power clean. Occasionally something like a box squat or something. Those things I feel like really do benefit my Brazilian jujitsu and also just my life in general. If I've got a decent dead lift and my group strength is good. My poster chain is good. It's usually a pretty good diagnostic that my back health is solid because I've had points in the past where my hip flexors were so tight that I would lose lumbar positioning. I would get some back crankiness from dead lifting. Both the strengthening and kind of diagnostic tool. It's been really valuable.

Jeff Tucker: Well no doubt. I mean when you think about the lower body component in BJJ as well. So yeah lifting. You know, it's so funny. That was one of the

other things in gymnastics. It was just taboo. You supposedly were not allowed to lift weights. Most male coaches did not want any lower body development. You couldn't have large legs. You don't get to go squat. I loved how that's turned around a little bit. I wouldn't say a lot. In my day, of course that going way back in the fucking '70s. It hurts to say that.

Robb Wolf: Pretty light bulb area there. Yeah. Yeah.

Jeff Tucker: But in my day we all loved to work out. But our coaches were very eyeball-ish about it. I think even still today. Back then it was girls had lower body development and their upper body wasn't that big. It was vice versa on the other guys. We were all upper body. Yeah, we looked like a bunch of cobras walking around. Our lats spread out all the time. Our legs we can put inside a PVC pipe. But I think that's changed a lot. You can see it in the sport because the art form demanded that. Right? When you start seeing the movements that we've got. You start seeing the muscle and the athlete change. I think it's great. Now the ring coaches bitch about it a lot.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right.

**[0:50:00]**

Jeff Tucker: But that's also sports specificity, right? I mean what we were talking about is...quite frankly CrossFit gymnastics is...I don't mean this in a bad way but it basically bastardized gymnastics because we're not doing it. I don't think anybody in CrossFit is going to go to the Olympics and compete gymnastics. I mean come on. I guess things could happen. I don't think that's going to happen versus what we see at the USAW platform, what do we have now? Are people even looking to buy for the Olympics? That's a different kind of a game. It required in our sports specificity in the barbell movement. That's not taking away anything away from Olympic barbell were there's a lot in it. But we're basically talking about what? Three lifts? Four lifts? With gymnastics, we're talking about a multitude of compulsory. I mean just a bevy of different things that had to be done before they're allowed to move in into another movement. I could go on and on about that.

Robb Wolf: No. No. It totally makes sense. Totally makes sense. Jeff let's shift gears real quickly before we wrap up here. You, a couple of years ago, found yourself out on a decent size ranch. Had been doing a lot to maybe create a little bit of a resilient lifestyle. What have you been doing with that?

Jeff Tucker: Man, yeah. For years I wanted to do this. I'm originally from Palo Pinto County, just a small blip on the map. It's out in west Texas. So my roots have always been... I'm kind of like lot of love but I sure try hard to be a cowboy. I fell at it a lot. So yeah, Tracy and I made the decision to kind of sell our businesses for in Fort Worth. She had retired from TCU as a one of the dean of students there. We wanted to, one, bring our kids up in this lifestyle. The other is to obviously get out and do that as you mentioned, kind of a home steady lifestyle. We're trying to still get the infrastructure where I want it. I see it may be right before I pass. I'll have exactly where I want it.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: But now we're raising us some cattle out here. We've only got a couple hundred acres and which is for me plenty. I'm doing a wild life management program right here through the state of Texas as well. We're trying to re-inhabit quail. We got our turkey population going. Our deer population is booming. I'm even trying to work it out right now where I can get some beaver out here. We want to create some beaver. But as far as the food stuff, we raise our own grass-fed beef. We've been buying, most are vegetables from local stuff lately because I just haven't figured out how I want to set my garden up out here or greenhouse. I tend to get paralyzed by a decision sometimes. But yeah, it's been a very big lifestyle change for the kids, especially. But for Tracy and for me, I'm just having a shitload of fun.

Robb Wolf: That's awesome. Well I only have three acres and I absolutely have my hands full. But I don't actually know how to swing a hammer or have any marketable job skills unlike yourself. If you wanted a really kickass meth lab, I can knock that out for you quick. But that's really the extent of my saleable job skills at this point. So you've got serious disadvantage there.

Jeff Tucker: The hammer is real easy. You know?

Robb Wolf: Oh, Dave Werner thought that too and he had a drill. He's like, "No, no, no." Actually this is a true story. We were hanging a gymnastics rings in his garage back at, God, 2001 or something. We're like, "Oh, we're going to do muscle-ups we're going to hang gymnastics rings." So he runs me up a ladder, he's like, "Yeah, just drill that thing in." I'm like, "Dude I'm really not very good with this." He was like, "No just zip, zip, put it in." Then he saw me fuck this thing up about six different times. He's like, "Robb, why don't you come down and you move these heavy things around and I'll get up there and do that."

Jeff Tucker: Well there may be hope. I mean whenever you and Nikki get some time to come out, I'll teach you to weld a little.

Robb Wolf: I would love that. I would love that.

Jeff Tucker: I mean that'd be easy. There's things like that. It's one thing that, one, I got it from my dad. He taught me a lot as a kid obviously. Then the fire department afforded me a great deal of training. I guess it's like watching somebody with a scalpel. They've got different training. Shit man. It's been a lot of fun. We drilled a couple of water wells out here. That's important. I think the water is going to be the next...honestly think it's the next big thing on the horizons. It's going in and we're getting some forms of control on it. So we kind of wanted to do that. I'm in the process of... I keep tweaking it. So I haven't pulled the trigger. But I'm about ready to. I'm going to have a 45 solar panel array out here. I want to get off the grid. We just want to be a good steward of the land. The great result is we kind of get off the grid. God knows with our political world where the hell all that's fun stuff is going.

**[0:55:00]**

Robb Wolf: Oh, totally. I don't know if you remember. The very end of both the book and the movie, "The Big Short." The genius guy that kind of saw all the 2007 implosion going. You know they said, "What's the interest of it now?" He just said, "Water." So water.

Jeff Tucker: Water.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. Yeah.

Jeff Tucker: It's a big deal man. It's a big deal. If our place is different out here, we had to drill about 440 foot down to get...well one to get good water. There's something. I mean I went and I've had it tested. It's good stuff. When you look at everything going on with things like fracking. I even get the old game, I can get my head around some of it. But gosh, when people start fucking up your water supply, especially where we're at, we have no other form of water than good wells.

Robb Wolf: Right, right.

Jeff Tucker: I'm glad we got them. In other places all you go to do is drill 80 foot. You've got great artesian wells But out here in west Texas, we're living in them. Lush deserts is what we're living in.

Robb Wolf: Right. Right. Well, Jeff it's been so much fun having you on the show. Let folks know where they can track you down online.

Jeff Tucker: Oh man. Yeah. One, I just want to tell you, I've enjoyed. I was excited about this. I even told Tracy one day you ask me what kind of boots I wore. I was like, "My God, you won't believe what Robb Wolf asked me today." She was kind of a big deal about it. Online, it's just CrossFitgymnastics.com is what we do there. I'm going to plug this while I've got you one here because we want to interview you one day. We started a little podcast called Hunting for the Truth. It's just a really stupid thing where me and a buddy of mine talk about hunting a lot.

Robb Wolf: I will be all over that. We'll talk long bow.

Jeff Tucker: Do you shoot a bow by the way?

Robb Wolf: Yeah, I do long bow and recurve. Mainly recurve. So yeah.

Jeff Tucker: Okay then there's our hook. I'm a long bow guy. He's a recurve guy and we'd love to have you on. Would you do this?

Robb Wolf: I would love that. I learned a little bit from this guy, James Schultz. His dad, Jim Schultz, learned from Howard Hill. Howard Hill is the guy who did the trick shooting for the original arrow flint "Robin Hood" movie.

Jeff Tucker: Howard Hill could hit, literally, hit an aspirin thrown in the air.

Robb Wolf: This is what Jim did. He had a video and you can still track it down. It's called "Hitting Them Like Howard Hill." He starts off with a silver dollar and then with a 50 cent piece. He finishes off with an aspirin thrown in the air.

Jeff Tucker: Yeah. I've watched it and it's amazing. Have you seen Charles Ferguson do his thing with...?

Robb Wolf: Yes. Yeah.

Jeff Tucker: The fact that that guy could hit a drop of water on the drop was impressive.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Jeff Tucker: And it's way in.

Robb Wolf: Right.



Jeff Tucker: But no, we'll have to have you on. Not that anybody would want to reach me. I'm not big and famous, like you but.

Robb Wolf: You much better looking though. You would be much handier if the apocalypse comes. You would actually be worth something. I would be that 170 pounds of food. That's about all I would contribute.

[laughter]

Jeff Tucker: Well I did get to see you kill an elk on TV. So I think you have more talent that you let on.

Robb Wolf: I might have a little bit of talent lurking in there but yeah. Butt Jeff it was great having you on the show. Really looking forward to see you in real life again sometime soon.

Jeff Tucker: Man, I would look forward to that. As always, the door is always open to you guys. We'd love to have you out whenever you get time.

Robb Wolf: Thank you very much. Well we'll talk to you soon.

Jeff Tucker: Adios.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Bye-bye.

**[0:58:38] End of Audio**