

## Paleo Solution - 330

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Robb Wolf:

Hey, folks. Robb Wolf here. Another edition of the PaleoSolution podcast. Super excited for today's guest, my good friend, Roy Dean. Roy is just an amazing guy. He is a Brazilian jiu-jitsu black belt, also holds a black belt in aikido and judo. Amazing diverse background. He has an audio engineering background as well as running businesses ranging from brick and mortar, martial arts school to multiple endeavors on the interwebs. He is the author of the recently released *Becoming the Black Belt* book which is outstanding. It just offers a ton for folks whether you're interested in Brazilian jiu-jitsu martial arts or not. It's a really fascinating story and Roy is a dear friend and I'm hugely honored to have you on the show today.

Roy Dean:

My friend, I'm glad to be here. I appreciate the invitation.

Robb Wolf:

Thanks, Roy. That was a poultry introduction given your background. Clearly, we have lots of overlapping interests, maybe primary in those if not secondary is a love of martial arts. How did you get into the martial arts? You have a really long interesting background that is very unique from the folks that I've encountered in all of my tinkering in the martial arts.

Roy Dean:

You know I always had an interest in Japanese culture. Even when I was really young, I found myself really drawn towards Japanese aesthetic and style. And for some reason, I was interested in going on an exchange program. I ended up joining a rotary exchange program and although my initial inclination was to go to Sweden, they decided otherwise and sent me to Japan.

So when I was in Japan, they encouraged me to train in the Japanese art after school. I had couple different options. I could flower arranging or kyodo, Japanese archery, kendo was another option. But I chose judo and it was a perfect choice because I had a lot of angst. I was 16. I was in a foreign land and I just had the energy to devote into that practice and it was something that changed my life. It changed the trajectory of my life completely. I ended up studying there in Japan training almost every day. By the end of the year, I had to mast enough competition wins to earn my shodan or first degree black belt. And then I came back to the US. I continued from there. Judo from the US is not at the same level just in terms of its popularity as it is in the Japan. It's much more of a cultural institution over there. So I ended up transferring in aikido Japanese jiu-

jitsu and then eventually Brazilian jiu-jitsu where I spent the majority of my time training.

Robb Wolf: Got you. What was the training environment like in Japan given the deep cultural roots and something that is probably taken as seriously as baseball was taken in 1950's America just like this thread ties the fabric of that society together. What was it like training in that pretty scared art of theirs and then being a foreigner?

Roy Dean: Well it was pretty interesting. Number 1, before I was allowed to do a throw, they wanted me to learn ukemi or self-protection skills like how to take a fall, how to take a roll and they had me do that every class. We're talking 6 days a week for 6 weeks. So my ukemi skills got really developed even though I had huge bruises on my shoulders and back. Those skills got developed and over the years I'm thankful for that training because it saved a numerable times in that split second where you just have to react like you got to go with this throw or you have to have flip out of a writ lock. Even in competition that's happened before. So that was one interesting thing. You know in America you tend to like you want to get right to the meat and potatoes.

You want to do something against somebody. But in Japan, they had me lay the foundation and then-- You know the training environment was-- Judo practices were held in the Budokan so we were right next to kendo and it was tough. It was really tough. There was nothing romantic about the training. You would get in, put on your judo gi, get on the mat and you would do a lot of repetitions and then you would do randori and then they would end with conditioning. And it was just a lot of repetitions. Of course my Japanese wasn't that great. Their English wasn't that great. I mean there were fluent teachers elsewhere in the school. It's kind of an international school. But in the judo club itself, it was basically just the visual instruction.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

**[0:05:28]**

Roy Dean: That was-- I mean that taught me a lot of lessons. Number 1, sometimes words can get in the way. Monkey see monkey do were much more adept. They're much more subtle physical cues that we pick up on. And you can actually advance pretty well by getting the feeling and the visual cues on how to do a technic properly.

Robb Wolf: Got you.

Roy Dean: Also we had training 5 days a week and then we had a half day on Saturday. And then on Sunday once a month, we would go and compete. We would do a shiai and that was great. I did well in my competitions until I reached about nikyu or a brown belt and then at that point, everybody was really good. You have to beat a certain number of people at your level to go to the next level. One of the guys from my rotary club observed me not doing well on that tournament. I did so poorly actually that I didn't even want to talk about with my host family. They're like how'd you do? It's like let's skip that.

Robb Wolf: I went fishing that day. I didn't actually go.

Roy Dean: So he kind of took me under his wing and got me private instruction with a judo master in addition to the training at school so that really helped bump me up to that next level where I was able to get my shodan by the end of the year and really get an understanding of what true budo is like and it's not romantic. It's a lot of repetitions. It's a lot of calluses on your knuckles. It's a sprained ankle that requires you to have an ankle wrap everywhere you go. I was grateful for that experience because number 1 certain muscular patterns were ingrained in my body from that early judo training. But also when I would get into different worlds like Japanese jiu-jitsu or aikido in particular, there's kind of a romanticization about what training is like in Japan what is really like. But what is really is just a lot of repetitions and a language barrier.

Robb Wolf: So not necessarily a transcendental mystical experience just a lot of hard work.

Roy Dean: No. But people certain wish it was so.

Robb Wolf: Right. Coming at all this stuff from kind of middling strength and conditioning coach, I'm always thinking about progression and how to move an average person through a system as well as the genetically talented person. Where you a great athlete or did you have fantastic attributes of flexibility or balance or anything and how did that play into your development or where you just like Joe average and you just really had to knuckle down and work hard?

Roy Dean: I would say I was maybe a little better than average. I would say maybe a good athlete but that's different than a great athlete who just arrives out of the womb. Boom! Muscles intact. I was always very coordinated, good balance, fast. But in terms of-- And I was worked hard. I was very determined. I was lifting weights that year. I wanted a transformation. You're 16 years old. You want to develop that man body. And there was

something really-- I look back on myself and it was fueled by a lot of different emotions but I was determined to get the most of that training. You know with judo you can be really strong but if somebody is faster and positions themselves correctly and knows how to distract you through kuzushi or off balancing. The strength comes into play but there are ways around it and when you feel that magic-- The first day I spared with my judo captain, I was bigger than he was. I was probably equally strong but he tossed me effortlessly over and over and that felt like magic and I wanted that magic.

Robb Wolf:

Right. It's interesting. So you know like Matt Thornton and some of the Straight Blast Gym folks talk a lot about live training and like if somebody comes from a boxing or wrestling background they really get that because that training involves a resisting opponent and there's a lot of authenticity there. Often times we people arrive at Brazilian jiu-jitsu their first time to have maybe a traditional martial arts background which doesn't necessarily bridge the gap quite the same way like there's fantastic elements to all of them. But a live resisting opponent can really blow somebody's mind when they first get exposed to Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

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But it's interesting, you went from a very I think what would be considered a live art judo and then went into the Japanese jiu-jitsu, aikido and then circled into Brazilian jiu-jitsu. What was that pathway like? What could maybe argue and again I'm probably going to get some slings and arrows for this. But the Japanese jiu-jitsu, aikido, maybe being a little bit less in that kind of a live scale in the way that they train. What was that like going from judo to these other arts and then how did you eventually plug into Brazilian jiu-jitsu and how did that influence you?

Roy Dean:

The path was definitely interesting. Judo prepares you for resistance. People are difficult to throw but once you get that kuzushi right, once you get that timing right, once you've done enough repetitions to be in the right place at the right time, it feels effortless. So I was looking-- I knew how hard you had to train in order to have that moment. So when I went to aikido, I was certainly willing to train hard. But like you said that means there is this certain level of resistance that is not incorporated. Because Morihei Ueshiba Osensei, the founder of aikido, he was staunchly against competition. He wanted his art to represent something else, a path of reconciliation which I completely understand. You already have different forms of jiu-jitsu, judo being one of them that have competition.

So I understand the founder's sentiment in that way. But here was kind of a gradual disillusionment that took place the longer I spent in aikido. I

just didn't feel like it was working for me. I was certainly learning certain elements of blending footwork, posture kamae all these different elements of the art and certainly a lot of great techniques involving the wrist and circular movement which I carry into Brazilian jiu-jitsu to this day. But in terms of really testing it out and allowing yourself to fail, they don't allow that failure. It's not part of the culture. So when it comes to Japanese jiu-jitsu, I was looking for something to kind of bridge that gap between aikido where you never fail and judo where you fail often or get thrown or occasionally end up victorious.

So Japanese jiu-jitsu, the Japanese jiu-jitsu style I studied was called Seibukan Jujutsu and it was founded kind of from a sister art of aikido something called hakkoryu jiu-jitsu. Now this art is all kata. But my instructor, Julio Toribio, he took hakkoryu and added the movement and hakkoryu had a lot of techniques that aikido had removed. They had kind of simplified the art. So it had more locks, joint locks and techniques that were taken out of aikido so that helped open up the technical pallet. It also included kind of a stepping stone toward like what we know a sparing or randori. In that they had an exercise called tai sabaki and then henka so you have kata and then tai sabaki is putting it into action but you know the attacks that are coming in. Then henka which means variations is you don't know what attack is going to come in but you have to be able to figure out a solution yet it still was not full resistance like in BJJ.

So I think it was good for me to begin with an art that had full resistance then go to an art that had essentially no resistance. Find that middle ground but ultimately I needed to-- Once you get a taste of that full resistance and the kind of I don't know there's a visceral pump that comes from resisting people in a dynamic and unpredictable format in kind of a common struggle that you just don't get with the other arts and that has an addictive quality that I definitely became hooked on Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

**[0:15:07]**

Robb Wolf:

I couldn't agree more. My first exposure was around 1992 and I had for that time descent Thai boxing background and did a little bit of high school wrestling and the first time that I rolled with someone who was a Brazilian jiu-jitsu practitioner, he was a purple belt and this was right when the UFC, the first UFC had come out. I would train with this guy one or two days a week and he would just play with me like there was nothing I could do with the guy which was frustrating and really also eye-opening. And then when Royce Gracie was doing his walkout deal with his brothers and a bunch of people then I saw this guy with them. I was kind of like oh okay this guy is kind of high up the food chain within this

group. But it was such a profound eye-opener for me. What was it like for you the first time that you were exposed to Brazilian jiu-jitsu and what was the circumstance like? Where were you? Who was the person that you first had the exposure with?

Roy Dean: There was kind of and I think a lot of people are in this boat. Their first exposure is not with an advanced practitioner. I ended up online and someone was looking for a training partner in Anchorage Alaska. So I was for kind of Brazilian jiu-jitsu, Gracie jiu-jitsu. So I inquired and he's like oh yeah man come on out. And he for whatever reason his training partners wouldn't last that long which is you might want to take-- Someone might want to look at that.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Roy Dean: But I ended up hooking up with him. He was a cool guy and he was a blue belt. He had been awarded a blue belt by somebody who was probably not that well qualified to even award the blue belt but it was raw in those days and I didn't know the difference. So I ended up meeting up with him and dude it was just annihilation. He just rear naked choked me like left and right. He used to be a wrestler and he just went 100%, 100% and I was like man I liked it. I liked the high that I got from that kind of physical exertion. And then later when I went to Claudio Franca's academy and learned under a black belt that was also really eye-opening but at that time you kind of expect that you're going to get whooped.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Roy Dean: And you're not going to be able to do that much. It's eye-opening and inspiring but it's not quite like the first time where you're like I was really trying as hard as I could and there's nothing I could do about it.

Robb Wolf: Right. And you already had multiple black belt, you had a judo black belt.

Roy Dean: I had a judo black belt which helped a little bit and then all of this training in aikido was so dedicated. Again this was an opportunity to make it work but when someone's crashing in on you with kind of like a double leg real fast, you're just not able to pull off where you imagine you could pull off. There was certainly-- As a teenager and as a young man, there was a lot of martial delusion I indulged about what I might be able to do if somebody attack me in just the right way. It's just kind of funny when I look back on it now.

Robb Wolf: Right. It reminds me the In Living Color martial arts instructor where he's like come at me like this and then the gal would just slightly alter like the scissor strike or whatever and it would bury in his shoulder or something.

Roy Dean: Exactly, not that wrist.

Robb Wolf: Right. So you ended up getting your black belt under Roy Harris. He has a really fascinating background as well.

Roy Dean: Indeed. I got my blue belt under Claudio Franca and he was recommended-- You know there was so many-- Even at that time we're talking about 1990. No, I'm sorry, 1998. The jiu-jitsu scene in Soca was awesome and San Diego was pretty good. Now a lot of people have come in since after 2005 in particular but it was pretty rich so I had several really good choices but I ended up going with Roy Harris. He was leading a grappling class, a BJJ class at US San Diego where I was finishing up school. You know he had a good reputation online. The students were really loyal to him.

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So he was recommended to me as kind of having an intellectual approach to BJJ and the teachers I've learned the most from have typically been kind of innovators and maybe a little bit rebellious to the status quo. So for example Julio Toribio with Japanese jiu-jitsu. He was out of the main line, a Japanese view and he was like I'm forging my own way and he did something pretty brilliant. And Mr. Harris came a JKD background. He was exposed to Brazilian jiu-jitsu and it was proven to him in a parking lot. I don't think that'll work and like let's try it out. So he got choked out a couple times. He's like man I need to explore this. So he started training with the Gracies. First five lesson was with Royler and he had the same eye-opening experience. You realize that this was playful but extremely powerful. There was something gentle about it. You could scale it.

He eventually received his black belt from Joe Moreira. He was one of the first Americans who received his black belt. Joe is an encyclopedia of technique and what Mr. Harris did was kind of frame it to a JKD perspective and he established some pretty clear guidelines for each belt which is something that I certainly needed. I needed something more than-- I know I need to compete. I know I need to train hard but I just wanted something very, very specific and I'm a verbal person. I learn that way as well. So he was able to really take me from blue belt through purple, brown and all the way to my current rank which is 3rd degree black. I feel really grateful. He's not a normal man. He is incredibly articulate. He's incredibly analytical and dedicated as well. He can categorize things brilliantly. One time he started writing combinations

just kind of a mental exercise, BJJ combinations and he wrote over 4,000 of this stuff.

Robb Wolf:

Wow.

Roy Dean:

I'm telling you that's how he is and people-- He's brilliant and people don't really understand the depth of his knowledge. But he's a fantastic teacher and he's really a capable martial artist. I mean you name it--knives, JKD, striking, punching, grappling, street fighting the whole thing. On top of that, he's a good person.

Robb Wolf:

Right.

Roy Dean:

Loyal. He's been asked to not divulge some technique, secrets or arts that he's trained in and he honors that and he's not a guy who's going to hop on the money train for short term gain. So a lot of respect to my instructor.

Robb Wolf:

Very cool. Roy, how has your training grown and evolved overtime? And then how does that influence say like the development of your brick and mortar school which you opened in Bend and also your affiliates. I'm just a blue belt knocking on purple belt but I'm 44 years old already looking at the way that my game is developing and trying to figure out a game. Even though for a 44 year old guy, I'm reasonably fit and capable, have a little capoeira background so I'm okay doing some cartwheels and squirrely stuff like that but I'm trying to look at the development of my game such that I don't need to pull out the engine and transmission when I'm 50 or 60 and completely rejigger the whole thing. And that goes from not destroying my grip from having an overly a grip dependent game to the volume and intensity of training. How has that changed over time? And that maybe an overly leading question trying to steer you down a specific path. But how that all changed and then how do you approach that attribute versus non-attribute driven training development?

Roy Dean:

It's a great question. I'll start by talking about my own personal game. You know I have certain movement qualities that developed from the overlapping forms of jiu-jitsu I've trained over the years--aikido, judo. That I have some attributes and movement patterns and levels of sensitivity that I can carry over from that. But when I was younger, you're into flash. You're into showing people how good you are and proving it and you have to show people so you want that. You want the flying triangle. You want the flying arm lock. You want the 12 step move that no one's ever seen.

**[0:25:15]**



It's a different kind of game. It's not necessarily geared toward-- You haven't reached the playfulness level certainly and you're not even in the efficiency stage. You're still in the effectiveness stage. And so I just want to be effective but yet I have this kind of ego or courage to display. Hey check out how good I am. And that led to kind of more acrobatic maneuvers-cartwheel, guard passes, flying triangles things like that. But over time you realize it takes a lot of cardio, take a lot of flexibility. It takes a lot of strength. And there are guys that are just willing to devote more time to that than you are. Even though it might fade over time, they're willing to play that physical game and they're willing to invest more than you are. So after a while I think around purple belt, around purple belt I kind of burn-- I was burn on competing. I was like what am I doing this for? You kind of risk injury to display how good you are. But once you've already won, I felt like that kind of satisfied something in me and then I started changing my game to just getting more efficient.

I think at white belt, you want to show how much you know and a blue belt in particular. At purple belt you want to get that tap because you can chain combinations of techniques together in order to end in a submission. But as you work toward brown, it's much less about flash because flash takes energy and if you just buckle down and get more discerning in what's a good position? What's worth holding on to? What's worth spending the energy to hold on to this position and hold your ground and gradually inch forward versus backing out starting from zero and then trying to pass a guard again or enter into some kind of new technical sequence. Your game starts getting really efficient and that's where we're going to start getting into like passing low and tight. The slow and tight game starts to begin. So initially I think we all want a slowly smooth dynamic game and then as time goes on you start bringing yourself back down to the grown a little bit more.

Robb Wolf:

Interesting.

Roy Dean:

And that has really-- I used to compete at 173 pounds. I'm 196 now. I have a different game. I can still move well but I'm not doing flying triangles. I'm not doing flying arm locks. I'm using my weight more. I'm much more pressure oriented. And then when the time requires it or the situation requires it, you can smoothly move and transition quickly into where you need to you. But it's all about finding that balance and I think as you get older, you want to stay tight and not necessarily like crashing but you just want to trace your body along their body the whole time.

Robb Wolf: Right. And try to avoid that scramble that's something that Henry Akins has talked about. His whole reason for being is trying to prevent the scramble. He doesn't want to scramble.

Roy Dean: Absolutely it resents too many things and all your advantages that you may have worked really hard for.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Roy Dean: I think that's great. I hear great things about Henry Akins and I hear there's a whole new generation of instructors that are offering a more conceptual approach or they'd been around long enough to just kind of extend what those original black belts brought over here from Brazil and I think there's no better time to learn jiu-jitsu than right now.

Robb Wolf: Right. Absolutely. There's so much online. You can actually find good instruction even in backwaters Reno Nevada now. It's a pretty cool thing. I was in-- It's funny because my first exposure to Brazilian jiu-jitsu I had 2 weeks of training in like '92 and then my next 2 or 3 week block was in 2004. Because I just couldn't find anybody. There was nobody around. When I was up in Seattle there was a group up there but they never had a school at that point. They were kind of floating around between YMCA and community centers and it was 8:15 or 9 o'clock at night and I had to be up at like 5 to go commute to work and everything. So it was just really hard to pin any of that stuff down. So most places now there's at least a decent school within a short drive.

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Speaking of these schools, you have had really successful brick and mortar practice. How did you structure that around developing an environment that is enticing to bring people in the door but once they're in the door, you keep them. Because I see this attrition problem whether it's a CrossFit gym or whether it's a Brazilian jiu-jitsu school where there's in my opinion and again looking at this kind of both as a business owner and as kind of strength and conditioning coach whether the environment is set up.

Even if you live in a place like Reno, there's almost 500,000 people here with the surrounding area which is a good pool of folks to pull from. But there's also only going to be a certain percentage of those folks that are interested in what you're doing. And if you're throwing people in the front kind of like a wood chipper and they just come out the backside with saw dust which means you're not really retaining them. At some point you've kind of burn through your pool of opportunity there and you're kind of stuck. But you landed in Bend Oregon which is not a large

city but you managed to build a very successful brick and mortar practice. How did you structure that so that it was amenable both to bring people in the door and keep them long term?

Roy Dean:

I think it comes down to who you want training with you and how accessible you make that environment. You want to have, number 1-- I put my heart and soul into creating an academy and making it the best that I could. I wanted to give people an experience like kind of my dream training experience. So I was very conscientious about every detail in the school. From the branding, I mean that's the first exposure people will have and the branding has to say professionalism and professionalism makes it inviting especially to people that might have been exposed to maybe another variant or another lineage of the art and they're like it's rough or maybe they've heard stories of people that-- It's almost as if there were two camps. One camp in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and they tend to be kind of younger guys, they want the training tough and it's kind of an associative thing. The training is so tough here that I can barely make it through that means I'm tough and I rub shoulders with really, really tough guys.

I took the opposite approach. Yeah, the training is good and can take you where you want to go but it's not so prohibitively difficult that you can't make through the warm ups.

Robb Wolf:

Right.

Roy Dean:

A lot of it is ego and kind of weeding people out and we want to represent this sort. This is the way I learned so this is the way it should be and my God, I mean, who doesn't suffer from that. Most people want that people to have the same experience that they did even if it's a bad experience.

So when...starting with the branding and then when they walked into my school it was clean like really clean. You don't have to say this is a professional environment. Again, the visual will inform you. So people knew, oh that's great. They met me. I'm not really that intimidating. I'm tall but I certainly don't have any kind of menacing personality so they felt at ease and said, "Hey, I think if he can do this, I can do this."

So I structured it so that number one, we might have a warm up but it was actually used as a warm up leading into positional escapes so people warmed up through learning the foundation of what they needed to know as they developed and they are. White to blue is mainly about

positional escapes in my system so that you don't have a fear or panic when people mount you or get you inside control. Okay.

And then we would have a lot of technique, more technique than most classes. We would go about 40 minutes of technique then we would roll. So you had the static and then you have nonresistant and then you have the resistant part and that formula worked very, very well. That was actually what it was in Japan with Judo. It's like you do with the calming and then you spar. So I think that was good. It was successful and allowed people to train in whatever level they wanted to.

If their body...I didn't force people to train. I didn't micromanage roles. I don't know what your body is feeling like. You could have the hardest workout in the world yesterday and you just barely recovering. So I'm going to make you spar with some and you're thinking, "No." You can...you don't have to spar. You can just watch. You can do whatever you'd like. You can take it at your own pace and if you make an environment like that people can train with you that are teenagers and people can train with you through their 50s and I think that's incredibly important to be able. To be inclusive for all those demographics in between because look the truth is, the young guys that wanna the fight they can't pick.

**[0:36:00]**

Robb Wolf:

Right, right.

Roy Dean:

The older guys, they don't want to fight. They just want to move and rub shoulders with young warriors and be healthy and be social and connected.

Robb Wolf:

Have some community.

Roy Dean:

That did. Have a real meaningful connection with other people. Those guys are going to keep you in business and add stability and a certain level of professionalism and experience. Often those people can give the business owner advice. And I sought a counsel with some of my older students several times because they have the life experience. It doesn't have to be fight club.

Robb Wolf:

I think we both had benefactors who had been successful in business in other arenas that kind of took both of us separately under their wings and it was a game changer for both of us, do you know and have we...we do it for our strength and conditioning practice. If we had created an environment where we run those people out, I don't...I might be working in a drug testing lab which would be okay I guess using my chemistry

skills but I certainly would not have followed that strength and conditioning practice and then you had somewhat of the similar experience where you had a really welcoming, challenging but appropriate with those environment and you had some great benefactors that had deep experience in online, add elements and then just also generally running a business which I think arguably was a huge boon for your success.

Roy Dean: Completely. I have a very good friend Rick Ellis which took me...

Robb Wolf: Who I was thinking of, yup...

Roy Dean: Yeah, his software ExpressionEngine was very popular. He set me up with my first website. We were...we had this...it was kind of advance. It was a different kind of look to the website. He got me to blogging, a BJJ blog. Imagine that back then. It was, yeah, I mean these were and he also gave me some really amazing advice. He's like, "Roy, the keys you got to make money when you sleep" and he encouraged me to...anything was possible in the online world and it's that kind of forward thinking progressive attitude that got me into having the website, creating DVDs. He's been a creative partner in those as well, also, getting into apps. Apps...getting into apps early both for I was an Android and I think that being first to market in some of those areas. That just helped establish my brand and I've been able to reach pockets. Every time I travel internationally I'm constantly amazed that how people know of my work because of what I've done on YouTube or through my apps. Additional media is a real blessing.

When Steve Jobs died it was tough for me because I realized how much of my life is dependent on what he had established. So, we stand on the shoulders of giants and it managed...Rick is a great friend who helped me out in numerable ways. Also, on the shoulders of Mr. Heiress he laid the foundation that I was just able to deliver in a very personable way to the world and people responded to that so I'm grateful to a lot of the supporters and pillars I've been able to lean on.

Robb Wolf: Oh, that's fantastic. Roy, what I'm...I see frequently particularly in the brick and mortar thing. I have a couple of brick and mortar related questions and then I definitely want to start into the online staff. The first question, I see it oftentimes a big challenge between the gym owner, the academy owner, they're very good on the front end. They shake hands. They kiss babies. They love teaching the craft that they are teaching and they're miserably but inappropriately equipped to deal with business marketing, billing all that type of stuff. How did you navigate that? Were

you one of these rare people that were pretty good on dealing with both the front and back office side of this or did you early on figure out like a really solid office manager and of the latter, how did you find that person? How did you compensate them in everything? So that you could do what you did best and leverage your talent and then let somebody else do what they did well in kind of managing the number side of the business?

**[0:40:49]**

Roy Dean:

So that is...okay, there are...there's two aspects I think to that question. Number one, one of the best pieces of advice I got before I launched in the academy was from the Aikido sensei. He said, "Be willing to do everything yourself" and I...that was so true. You have to be willing to roll up your sleeves and learn about whatever, Google AdWords. Learn about marketing. Learn about print copy. Learn about content management systems. Every aspect of your brand, you are launching a brand. You have to be willing to go in there and then list, understand it and make it workable but overtime as the business develops and as it grows and I was pretty good at wearing multiple hats. I could go into different modes pretty adeptly but overtime as the business grew, as my student base grew, as the number of videos that I was doing increased.

One unique aspect that I had at my academy was I showed these rights of passage which I had built demonstrations so people would essentially test for a rank, and it would be in front of their friends and family and the school and I would film everyone. There was no charge for it. There was never any charge for any kind of rank. I would put this video on YouTube and they could share it with everybody and people could follow the story of my academy online. So that was fantastic. People loved it but I created a monster with myself. I mean those belt demonstrations are time consuming. I edited so many and eventually, I ended up hiring one of my students. Her name was Becky Creswell. She was really a jiu jitsu phenom. I couldn't believe it. She was so...she caught on to jiu jitsu so quickly and killed it. She was great competitor all of that and I said, "Look, Becky," at first I just hired her to send our DVDs because I was sending a lot of DVDs out and that was killing me. It was good money but I didn't want to live my life at the post office. She's for international shipments and this is way before Stamps.com.

Robb Wolf:

Right

Roy Dean:

I mean this is, yeah, it was just....

Robb Wolf:

I remember that. We were doing the similar thing. It was a scene. Yeah.

Roy Dean:

Yes, totally. So Becky originally came in to deliver DVDs and I said, "Hey, let me show you how to do this." Now, when I was a sound designer back in San Diego and training jiu jitsu under Mr. Heiress, I'm like purple and brown belt. I was actually an intern at my job. There was a sound designer before me. I was an intern for him and then I took over his position. He moved back to Atlanta. I took over his position and I continued to take on interns usually like the most gifted students at the top of their class from UCST. So then I would teach them music composition. I would teach them video editing whatever over at the production company where I was a sound designer. So I was really used to taking people under my wing and teaching them technical skills.

So that's what I did with Becky. I got her into video editing and also how to film and then Becky eventually graduated from nursing school and moved to Portland and I had a couple of other secretaries after her. It's a time consuming process. You have to teach them. You have to teach them how to film. You have to teach him how to edit. You have to teach them how to mix music. You have to teach them how to do all these things but eventually when you find the right person and you can lean on them, it really helps free you up so you're not doing everything and the power of focus. You can go back to what you do best. So that I think is important once you reach a certain level. If you'd go into opening a brick and mortar not willing to learn how to do everything or do everything by yourself, I think that's a mistake.

**[0:45:22]**

Robb Wolf:

I've seen that and catastrophically, yeah, multiple times whether it was martial arts facility, cross-fit type gym, the artist just doesn't allocate the time. There's just the reality that when you stick a shovel in the ground and plowed open and you're going to start something that's never existed, even if you're widely successful, there's going to be two to five year period where you really don't go on vacation a lot. You don't have a lot of free time and you're just working your balls off like what do they say, an entrepreneur is somebody who is willing to work for less than minimum wage but put in 80 hours a week to do it. It's true. Whenever you want someone else somebody gets the secret sauce and they run it for six months and everything blows up and they have no idea how fucking lucky thing they are but generally it doesn't roll that way.

Roy Dean:

Exactly and you're looking at the curse because they, "Hey, I'm so brilliant. I hit a big with this." Then maybe they're trying to replicate it or maybe they're trying...that maybe the magic is not there for that and that can be...one of my most successful friends said, "Get rich slowly. It last longer."

Robb Wolf: That's funny. That's funny. I just got to spend some time with John Frankl and he said something almost identical and there's really interesting jiu jitsu corollaries there as to the way that you want to tackle your training. Do you want...what has Chris ought to say, "It doesn't matter who is good, it matters who is left."

Roy Dean: Yes

Robb Wolf: Similar in business, similar in relationships, so, again, I don't want to be...oh, yeah go ahead.

Roy Dean: Can I interject John Frankl story that I never...

Robb Wolf: Absolutely

Roy Dean: So this was a moment. You have moments in your jiu jitsu career where your perception changes of what you need to do. What other people are capable of. So John Frankl was...he did...the majority of his training over in Boston but then he would train with Claudio Franca in the summers when he was in Sta. Cruz. I was a blue belt at that time and he was blue belt. We were there one night. We ended up sparing the last round and it was kind of...it was pretty back and forth. I was...I don't know it was a hard battle. It's pretty even. Okay fast forward one year later. He comes back. He's wearing a purple belt. I was as if...yeah, he's wearing a purple belt but I'm good too. I've gotten better.

We roll. He destroys me. I looked back. It was so...he was bored during the roll and when there's so ahead of you that they're just waiting for you to make the mistake, okay fine, let me take the submission already please. I was just blown away and then I heard that he had trained every day. He went back to Boston and trained every day. I thought that's what I need to do because I was training like about twice a week or something. I just wasn't...I'm still living Monterey and traveling up to Sta. Cruz and it was just...there's nothing...in Japanese they call it 0:48:51.9 in every day training. For those I just had a conversation with a friend in L.A. He's working with the kid who is training every day and he can't believe his progress. The key with that every day training is you can burn the candle to the end. You have to give a little in the tank.

Robb Wolf: Right

Roy Dean: We've gone through a discussion about how like the programming in your mind of your neuromuscular patterns is what's important and when you do it every day you etch those patterns more deeply. It's like



programming. You program a little every day and then you don't get the...the physical exhaustion is the eye strain and in the end your fingers cramping and your neck cramping from being hunched over. You got to pace it out and same thing with something physical. You have to paste it out and if you didn't get in there consistently that was a huge lesson. I've never actually seen John since then but that was a big lesson for me so I definitely thank him for...

Robb Wolf:

I got to do some training with him yesterday and I could do nothing with him, nothing and again like I'm blue belt knocking on purple belt who was still very much a beginner and technically roll beginners and all that stuff but and a reasonably strong, reasonably athletic person and I've rolled with other black belts and you can get something going on. I mean I always been caught but I can get something going on and I just I couldn't get anything going on. It was literally as if I have never done jiu jitsu in my life like had this been my first day of jiu jitsu it would have qualitatively been very, very different than like the last three years of decent training and the previous 20 years of thinking about training. Yeah, Yeah

**[0:50:43]**

Roy Dean:

It's funny when you...it's funny when you...say you're blue, purple belt used to being able to get your game going even if you're not successful, you can usually like end up some position. You can get like a familiar grip but often with an advanced black belt they will, they'll freeze you out in the middle of getting something.

Robb Wolf:

Right, right

Roy Dean:

It's in between the techniques that they're operating and they can be really disorient.

Robb Wolf:

Oh, yeah, it was like I took a giant bite of peyote cactus before that session. That's interesting. When you were talking about training, your support staff it made me...I've been kicking around this idea for a blog post or maybe something that would be guest hosted by somebody that's more in the Brazilian jiu jitsu scene but I've seen this kind of catastrophe happen again and again where an individual has been working their way through the Brazilian jiu jitsu system and they go from purple belt to brown belt; brown belt or that they're knocking on the door to black belt. They get their black belt and then there's this drama that emerges because the person actually wants to do this for a living. It's kind of...there's a horrible analogy and I'll probably going to have to modify this at some point but every once in a while you get this national inquirer type, type story where it's like overweight women sneezes at the circus

and discover she is pregnant because she'll like delivers a baby in the stand or something and I see this almost that it's similar deal where I looked at black belt and Brazilian jiu jitsu is essentially a PhD in combative. Like blue belt is about two to three years and that's like an associate and the purple belt is kind of like a bachelors and then the masters at the brown belt. Not perfect correlations but pretty good, pretty good example.

So most people who get a PhD or a doctorate in something, you can usually expect that they're kind of going to want to do something with it. Time and again the folks that are producing this PhD's in combative, they act not only surprised but angered, by the fact that they have birthed this surprise baby, in the stance of a circus, and they just have no way seemingly of dealing with this but you've had great success with affiliates and developing coaches who have been going on to carve out their own niche. Why is the disconnect that's occurring there? What the heck is going on? I mean on the one hand you could say the world is infinite, the economy is infinite, there's enough to go around but then also there's kind of reality that you can't saturate the market of cross-fit gyms, a great example of that but what's the disconnect there with these instructors that end up really kind of briefing down or leaning on these burgeoning black belts and trying and just timing their progress, and usually what happens is the person peels out. There's a ton of drama, half of the student base leaves, and it would have been way better for the instructor to just sit down and say, "How can I make you deal so that it's so good that you stay here forever and you don't even want to open at other school," as one example like what is going on with that?

Roy Dean:

That is something that I...okay, you can...sometimes it's not what you do, it's how you do it. That's more important and I think that etiquette...etiquette is an intelligent way to get along with other people. I think that sometimes, that etiquette of branching out on to your own is just a bridge in a way that people find defensive. So I had...I talked about it in the book, I had some students that left me. I didn't feel they were ready to leave, but they wanted to do it. They have to carve their own path. Shake their hands and wish them well and they'll go through struggles, trials, tribulations. I think if you maintain a professional attitude, and simply wish them well, I think there's very little for them to attach drama too.

[0:55:24]

I've had people that I felt didn't do things in the...what I would consider the right way, and they want to launch their own vision. It's okay that's their decision. It could have been better. You just don't want to have that original instructor feel disrespected. So if you are a black and you say,

“It’s been my dream to open an academy I really want to and I don’t want to open it.” Even then I’ve observed this from people I spoke with you who have had kind of...they have a black belt but once they open their own gym, they don’t want to do it under as satellite or as an affiliate or under the umbrella.

They want to do their own thing 100%. They just go out and you find out about it from Facebook or online or your students telling you, I mean there are...that’s kind of a wrong way, I think you should be a man. I think you should talk to the instructor if you can work it out. Shake hands anyway. Just don’t be under handed about it. The reality is everybody says they will not steal the students from their environment they were training. The reality is they’re all steeled students that they were training in their former environment or at least because they have personal connections and those students feel torn because they viewed them not only as a teacher or a guide or a coach, but then they also have a personal dynamics too, so then now they are in this and I have been that. I have been the star student caught between two teachers. The original teacher and someone who went out on their own and then they’re pulling at me. Whose you’re going to go with? Why choose both, and you don’t want to be a teacher that says, “You have to choose.” That’s not the right way. You can train there. You can train here. If you compete you fly only one flag.

Robb Wolf: That would be a good point to put a demarcation in the sand there.

Roy Dean: Absolutely.

Robb Wolf: Got you.

Roy Dean: So everyone knows what the real, what the true association is. But in terms of affiliates, I mean like with my thing I have actually closed because I have been reworking my affiliation program. I’m pretty excited about opening it up again and people have been inquiring about like I really want to, but I just haven’t been ready. I needed to kind of reinvent and rework and get excited about offering really cool insights and resources to my affiliates. So that’s going to get public again in 2017, but, basically what I offer them is freedom and creativity. You can have an MMA gym and just have a RDA BJJ as your Brazilian jiu jitsu program. You can do whatever you want. You can brand it however you want. You can have your own logo. These things...my instructor allowed me to pursue my own unique vision. I want to honor my affiliates giving them that same thing. I don’t want to stifle them.

Yeah, there is strength and uniformity and the brand, but that's for branding guidelines are for. I think more people want to...it's about synthesis more than adhering to what's established and the brand cannot waver. I think synthesis and allowing people to combine jiu jitsu into their home environments into their own martial arts schools. I think that's really the future and so just not holding on to tightly. I think that people should understand and I mentioned this in the book that you will lose every student you ever had. You need to just appreciate every student for as long as they are with you.

Now, I have guys that may never leave me, but they might, and that's okay. But the more you try to hold on to them, the less likely the more they feel that constriction. Trying to control is never good so just let them go. Just poo, let it go and if they want to be with you, they'll find a way to make it known that they wanted to be with you, and then you could continue to guide them. The drama...there's a lot of BJJ drama and that's one of the reasons that I tried to control what goes in my mind. I try not to go to places that have a lot of that. I love jiu jitsu but I'm not into the drama. There's a lot of sowing circle gossip that goes around and people want to generate controversy and I'm just not into it.

**[1:00:25]**

Robb Wolf:

Right

Roy Dean:

That kind of...I think BJJ because we were so hungry for techniques and information was so scarce. We were attached to the computer to find out the advance or the art of how it was evolving. So I think we have been seamless like modern BJJ player are seamless with technology that is part of their training to be able access new techniques, new approaches and extension of that is the social media environment whether it's a forum or Facebook but I think BJJ is a small world. It feels big when you're in it, but it's really a small world and to be just people going around in the same fish bowl. I think people need to like release a little bit more. Not worry about the size and the fish bowl and allow fish to be wherever they wanted to be. Swim away my friends, swim away.

Robb Wolf:

I love it, I love it. Roy, before we wrap up, I definitely want you to talk about the book that you've written. What it is? What's the process was in writing it? Then let folk know where to track you down in the interwebs.

Roy Dean:

Thanks to you for giving me guidance and encouragement during that process. The book is "Becoming the Black Belt." It's my second book. The first one is "The Martial Apprentice," where I detailed my stay as a live in student as an uchideshi under a Japanese jiu jitsu master. Then becoming the black belt picks up where The Martial Apprentice left off, which is

moving to southern California and fully devoting myself to the study of Brazilian jiu jitsu. So I was attending UC San Diego, and it talks about the SoCal jiu jitsu scene at the time competing challenges, injuries, dramas and then being tired of the 95 gran and knowing that my soul is slowly dying behind this computer screen and I can't stay in this window list office any longer.

So quitting my job, launching an academy in Bend and thanks to the parody interwebs and a few good friends, I was actually able to spread my unique form of jiu jitsu and message, to people around the world. That changed my life dramatically and I just kind of detail the years of running a brick and mortar school, and then launching into the next chapter. When now in the middle of the next chapter I'm down here in Palm Springs, California, I'm back to training and being a student. Of course I'm still teaching.

I have my affiliates. I just got back from Italy, in Germany in doing seminar over there. It's fantastic really we've filmed over at Italy. My training begins again but you can check out the book on Amazon just look for becoming the black belt and if you want to know more about me you can go to roydean.tv. You can also subscribe to my new channel. I'm very excited about it. A VHX was recently purchased by Vimeo. There's a lot of great technology into the hood. I'm impressed with my own channel at how well it works. It has all of my instructionals from white belt bible to black belt requirements, seminars. I did some private instructional over in Italy with some glimpses of Venice and so I just put that up on the channel as well. My Germany seminars are going up there. My country in jiu jitsu seminar that I did in Chicago recently so that the content continues to go up. It's really good and I'm excited about being able to share this with more people.

Robb Wolf:

That's awesome. We will have links to all of that in the show notes. Just super stoked that we finally got you on the show. These things been a long time in the works. We've been trying to coordinate schedules to get you on here but, Roy, just a dear friend and have learned so much from you both of that Brazilian jiu jitsu but business and life and transformations. You've just been a dear friend, I mean, that sincerely and really honored to have you on the show.

[1:05:17]

Roy Dean:

It goes both ways. Really great to have you in my life and to see our progressions, as we march forward and bring a little bit of awareness and just showing people how to optimize their life. I'm trying to do my small part and you definitely reach a large audience and so I appreciate the work you do.

Robb Wolf: Awesome Roy. We're looking forward to seeing you in real life. We need to get up to Rhino to do some gambling. Give me what for and help improve my game, so I'm looking forward to that.

Roy Dean: Well, let's make that happen.

Robb Wolf: Okay sounds good. Roy, take care, a huge honor having you on the show.

Roy Dean: You too

Robb Wolf: Okay, bye-bye.

Roy Dean: Bye-bye.

**[1:05:59] End of Audio**