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## Jason C. Brown

LA: This is Luke Allison here with the CriticalBench.com Weekly Muscle Building Exert Interview Series. Today I'm here with Jason C. Brown. Jason, how are you?

JB: I'm great, Luke. Thanks for having me on, man. I appreciate it.

LA: Definitely. I'm glad you can make it. We're going to do something a little different today. I want to ask you primarily about jujitsu and kettlebells. But, I want to start with giving you a chance to sort of talk about your background and let people know who you are.

JB: Sure. Background. Boy, that's a broad topic. I started training pretty much in my adolescence. I was fortunate enough to have an athletic older brother and very supportive parents, and we actually had a weight room in our basement where all the neighborhood football players and wrestlers would come and train. So, I was always around strength and conditioning and I'm from the cold region in Pennsylvania, and wrestling is such a strong tradition in those areas that I think every kid grows up weight training or training in some form.

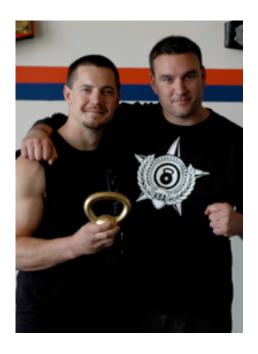
When I went to high school, I was very fortunate enough to have a great strength and conditioning coach. My high school was always one of the best powerlifting teams in the state and in the country.

Right after high school I went in the Marines and came out, studied kinesiology at Temple University. I've always been a strength and conditioning maniac, fanatic, always looking at ways to improve performance. I remember playing in my back yard in the woods and thinking of what would a ninja and what would a samurai be doing, trying to replicate what they would do.

So, I don't know if that's what you were looking for, Luke, but...

LA: Absolutely. I think it's useful sometimes for people to hear where everybody's coming from, just in case they haven't heard your name or seen your material before.

You mentioned wrestling. I immediately started to think of the Lee High Valley and all of that.



JB: Yes, yes.

LA: Something a little bit different. Talk about sort of jujitsu. Jujitsu and wrestling start to go sort of divergent paths there. That's a little different.

JB: They do start to go....are we talking conditioning here, Luke? Or, are we talking...

JB:

LA: Yeah, just think about sort of obviously your specialty. You talked about strength and conditioning. You train a wrestler a lot different than you do for jujitsu, because it's a very different aim.

I think it's a very different sport and I think it's a very different culture. The wrestling, the mentality and the determination that a wrestler brings to the mat is completely different than that of a jujitsu player, and it may have something to do with the jujitsu coming from Brazil. My wife is Brazilian, half of my family is Brazilian. They're more laid-back.

We have this crazy work ethic here and particularly in the States where wrestling is popular, very strong work ethic. And look at who all the wrestling greats were, Dan Gable. I don't think anybody could out-condition or out-work Dan Gable. So, that mentality carries over into wresting. And you can see it very much within the type of matches that they play, but also the type of conditioning that they bring or expect to bring to their matches.

Also, one other thing that I like to point out is most...not necessarily most, but it's hard to find recreational wrestlers. But, it's very...I would say at least 90% of the people that practice Brazilian jujitsu do so on a recreational level. They want to go in, they want to burn some calories, they want to have fun, they want to socialize. They don't necessarily need the level of conditioning as say a collegiate or an Olympic wrestler would need. So, those needs are a little bit different. And I think you have to approach those athletes differently as well.

LA: I think that's very fair. It's always interesting in the United States, so many sports get funneled through academia, funneled through public high schools and funneled through NCA athletics. It's very weird what happens to the rest of sports when people are sort of left to their own devices, how they develop, how they sort of regulate them and whatnot.

JB: Yeah. And you can even see it on other sports such as judo. Judo, I think the conditioning is even a little higher or in more demand so than Brazilian jujitsu. But even that doesn't compare to the conditioning that the wrestler will bring into the match, or even the drive.

One of my favorite things is to see a good judo player play a nice wrestler, see who has the upper hand on that.

LA: To bring it back a little bit to the strength and conditioning, so we don't lose absolutely everybody, talk about where you began. Talk about the convergence for you of jujitsu and kettlebells.

Yeah, I think the kettlebell is one tool that goes along very well with, one, the mentality of Brazilian jujitsu and, two, the needs of the jujitsu athlete, both recreationally and competitively. I like to use this term, 'kettlebell flow'. I think the kettlebell is one of the best tools to accomplish this. We have this famous quote from Rickson Gracey, "flow with the go." He meant to say, "go with the flow", but everything else... He said it once and everything else has gone from that.

But, kettlebells allow you to flow from one movement to the other without setting the bell down, without any complicated process. You can just switch from one exercise into the another... We call it kettlebell flows, but we also call them kettlebell complexes. And you can work into very...we don't necessarily use the word sport specific, but we use the word directed. Positions that are directed at improving the attributes needed for Brazilian jujitsu, whether they be hip throws, whether they be standing up in base, some mat work. The positions that you can accomplish, the complexes that you can accomplish through kettlebell training, I think, are very much directed towards improving the attributes needed for Brazilian jujitsu.

LA: I think that begins to make sense if people can kind of see what they would perceive as regular weight training as sort of disjointed. You know, changing weights, moving from machines, things like that, which is just not applicable to jujitsu. That just doesn't happen.

JB: It just doesn't happen, and also, you brought up a good point. if you walk into a traditional or a commercial fitness facility, the guys might be strong, but they'll do a set of bench presses and where do they go? To the water fountain.

LA: Yeah, or they sit. One or the other.

JB:

JB: Yeah. A set of bench, two minutes off, go over to the water fountain. Right? And then they come back and maybe a set of curls, two minutes off, go to the water fountain, talk it up with your buddies. And that's not the way Brazilian jujitsu is. And I think with kettlebell training, also, it's very time intensive. I think if you're interested in Brazilian jujitsu and getting better on the mat, you need to spend a lot of time on the mat.

So, you don't necessarily have that hour, hour-and-a-half, to devote to your strength and conditioning program. That's why you need a very concentrated 20, 25 minutes, 35 minutes, of conditioning to help improve the attributes that you need on the mat. And I think the kettlebell is one of the best tools to enhance those attributes, whether it be flexibility and mobility. I use the term 'power-endurance', 'strength endurance'. I think those are the attributes that you need to be successful in Brazilian jujitsu.



LA: I was going to go to power-endurance next, but I'll guess we'll go through it now. One of the thoughts is that power-endurance is fighting, but it's not an attribute that most people think about. They think about endurance, they think about strength, they think about things that are either much lower or much higher. Talk a little bit about that.

JB: Yeah, that's interesting, because I was giving a workshop this weekend and we were discussing our program design model. And somebody said, "Isn't powerendurance an oxymoron?" And it sort of is. But, several well-established coaches do use that term and I think it is applicable, because you can see... I always use this example. Power-endurance, like kettlebell moves are fast. They have an inherent

speed to them. You can snatch a kettlebell slowly, you can't swing a kettlebell slowly. But, if you perform them for high repetitions, it teaches your body to perform a powerful or fast movement over an extended period of time.

It's completely different than doing something like pushups over an extended period of time. There's not necessarily that inherent speed. You can do pushups nice and slowly. You can't do a swing or a snatch nice and slowly. A powerful impulse that's there inherently within the kettlebell drills are not there within other drills. You can make them happen there for like maybe a plyo-pushup or something else like that, but you won't be doing that very long.

Kettlebells, you can extend the sets as long as you like and you'll still have to move quickly. So, that's what I think the term 'power-endurance' applied very well to the kettlebell training world, at least.

LA: I think it's Jonathan Chamber who uses that a lot or sort of made it popular, the strength and conditioning.

JB: Yeah, 'power-endurance' term.

LA: Yeah. George St. Peirre. That's at least where I think I remember it from.

JB: Tudor Bompa speaks about it within all his literature as well.

LA: And that's if you're really serious. That's big time. Everybody's at different levels, obviously, how serious you want to make it.

You mentioned sort of what power-endurance is, but the need for power-endurance is, because you can't spend the time in the gym, you have to spend it on the mat because as you look at the higher level jujitsu athletes, people are training 10, 12, 15, 18 times a week.

JB: Yes.

LA: And you could not possibly recover if you were doing things that really depleted your central nervous system.

JB: Correct. Yeah.

LA: And that's the thing that I think is sort of...I think is really interesting about kettlebells. You can get a 24 or a 32 and you could have it at your house, and you could not need to sort of commute or go somewhere else and you could get sort of an appropriate workout.

JB: Yeah, I agree completely.

LA: I think it's the coupling together, I think, that is sort of more than the sum of its parts. I think we've talked about the applicability. One of the things...the movements you can do with kettlebells, we mentioned briefly. I'm not a fan of the kettlebell snatch. You have really strong feelings on the kettlebell snatch.

This is great Luke, I'm glad you brought that up. Because, I talk... A lot of people think of like a... It's interesting, because I speak-out against some stuff, although most of my business comes from the kettlebell training world, I often speak-out against it, and I tell people during my workshops, the kettlebell snatch is a move, an exercise, and most of my workshops are attended by other trainers and other coaches. It's a move that you may never need to give your client or your athlete.

It's just one thing...and it's considered the bizarre of kettlebell lifting; it's considered the bizarre of kettlebell exercises, but it is not a move that you need to give to everybody. And I think we use the 80/20 rule. Can I get the same benefit from an exercise that maybe be less technical to get the athlete training sooner. Then, I'll give them that exercise. If all I'm looking for is powerful hip extension and to train the posterior chain, glutes, hamstrings, upper back, mid back, erectors, everything else like that, you can derive all the benefit from that from a good, steady diet of swings and a couple of different variations. But, you never need to approach the kettlebell snatch.

LA: And to go a little bit deeper in this, my thought on this had been, as came from Russia and that the snatch is a part of the Girevoy sport. It's a sort of competition lift, and that was something that just... I don't know what happened in terms of it being brought over, but it was brought over and it was very serious. It was often one of the first lifts taught to people.

JB: Yes.

JB:

LA: Okay.

LA:

JB: And I think, you know, and there are the kettlebell purists. I'm not a kettlebell purist, but there are kettlebell purists who think there's only three lifts you should ever do with the kettlebell: snatches, cleans and jerks. And maybe a couple derivatives of it. But, I, personally, am not of that school. I think anything that you can do with a dumbbell you can definitely do with a kettlebell. I'm for using the kettlebell for whatever you want to enhance. Any exercise, any attribute you're looking for, I think the kettlebell can be used to enhance that and I think to limit you're training to snatches, cleans and jerks is just silly, to be honest.

It's sort of ideology and style and things like that, sort of translated where they don't necessarily need to go.

And then one more point on the snatch. What are your feelings on sort of a dumbbell snatch? Does that have...is that appropriate for Brazilian jujitsu? Is that something to look into?

JB:

You know what? Luke, before I got heavily into kettlebell training, I did 90% of my training fully with dumbbells. I love dumbbells and Olympic lift variations. I actually prefer dumbbell snatches over barbell snatches. I think they're easier to teach, I think they're safer for most individuals and I think they're actually very easy for most people to pick up.

So, if you look at the food chain, if you're going to include snatches within you program, I would actually look to include dumbbells...and I'm a kettlebell guy. But, I would include dumbbells first, kettlebells second.

Just in terms of adding it into the program, in terms of coaching, in terms of getting the athlete involved, it's quicker. I think the dumbbell is a little bit easier to go with initially.

And also, you have to look at the... A lot of people are worried about the impact on the wrist if they never tried the snatches with the kettlebells before, or maybe they don't have an excellent coaching staff or somebody who can teach them how to do it without nailing their wrist.

I mean, if you work in the general fitness population, forget it. Your clients aren't coming back on Tuesday morning if they whack the Hell out of their wrist all day Monday. You know?

LA:

Right. Yeah, it seemed like a lot of this had just been swallowed whole by a lot of other people, and it had just been sort of reproduced and re-taught. I was just not... I was not convinced and I'm sort of glad to hear certainly some agreement.

JB:

There's a lot of hype out there, Luke, around kettlebell training, and I tell everybody during my workshops, and again, these are kettlebell workshops. Look, kettlebells are not the best tool for strength development either. They're just not.

If we had a 72-year-old woman in our workshop, she could easily deadlift the heaviest kettlebell in the room, easily. So, what are you going to do? You know? You need to give her a heavier load and it's not going to be a heavier kettlebell. It's going to have to come from some other implement.

LA:

And I think that actually circles back to something that we were talking about earlier, where you have wrestling and football where you have people that are sort of in a structured environment doing things like power cleans. So, they get some power and they're being supervised, doing glute-ham raises. But, someone that walks in from

doing jujitsu, here's a kettlebell. You're probably not going to be able to get them to where they need to be with just that.

JB: Yeah.



LA: It's a very weird thing.

JB: Yeah. But, I'll tell you why I think jujitsu guys go towards kettlebell training more so than... I haven't met very many jujitsu players, unless they come from a wrestling background, that are into barbell training, that are into their one-rep max in the deadlift or their bench, or the back squat, something else like that. They're not necessarily interested in that maximum strength training. They're more interested in conditioning. They're more interested in maybe some unique ways of training. They like to move their bodies, they like to feel the flexibility, the dynamics and stuff like that.

I think kettlebells provide that a little bit more than the barbells. And again, I never met...well, I shouldn't say I've never met, but I've run into very few jujitsu guys that are like, I want to deadlift 700. You know? Maybe Roddy Ferguson.

LA: Well, I'm not sure that counts. He's a judo Olympian, for people that don't know.

I think this really gets to an interesting point is, in a lot of jujitsu, for people that don't know, it looks like people rolling around in their pajamas, and it's very weird and sometimes it can be hard to follow. But, in a lot of instances, there are not take-downs. You'll have people that pull guard and they'll fight for sweeps, which I think really does dovetail with the point that you made about this is not aggressive; this not sort of one-

rep max strength and confrontational. This is a very different sort of approach across all aspects. Go into that, if you can.

JB:

Yeah. I think if you were to compare, and I'm not sure how much people listening know of the different wrestling or grappling martial arts, but like judo and jujitsu, they are the same thing. Skill set wise, they are the same thing. It's the rule set that determines the difference.

So, I mean, one is more advanced on the ground, the other is more advanced on the feet. Judo is more advanced on the feet, jujitsu is more advanced on the mat. But, the same arm-locks are there, the same throws are there, it's just where the emphasis is placed.

Judo players, again, it's still the same skill set, it's the rules that make the difference. Judo players need to have that maximum strength because they'll be picking up athletes that are trying to resist being picked up, that weigh the same or maybe a little bit more than them.

Jujitsu players, on the mat, usually do not have to actually pick up the body of their opponent. There's very elaborate ways to work around people and pin people and everything else like that, but you're not dealing with the full body weight of an individual that's resisting being thrown, as you would in maybe another grappling or wrestling art.

So, I think that's one reason why that maximum strength isn't there. And I think jujitsu players like the flow a little bit more. If I could say it, and I love judo, but the finesse, at least on the mat, of the Brazilian jujitsu player is a little more, they call it the smooth art, because the finesse and the movements are a little smoother and maybe are a little more crude in judo, even though it could be the same. But, the judo player might use their attributes more to accomplish their goal, whether it be the power or the speed. And the jujitsu guy would use the sex appeal, if that makes sense.

LA:

Certainly. Well, I think all of this has really big implications for the strength coach, because as these sports... None of these are very old in their sort of modern incarnation and the way that just the politics and the rules sort of drive the way that the sport develops, very, very interesting. It makes it feel like we're not entirely sure what we're doing as a strength and conditioning coach.

JB:

Yeah, and I think it's really important also to look at... I mean, Vern Gambetta, I'm not sure if you ever heard of Vern Gambetta, Luke, but he is one of the pioneers in functional training and strength and conditioning. He told me one thing, he was like, two athletes can be playing the same sport, but be playing a completely different game. Right?

So, I might like to play the top position in Brazilian jujitsu, you're still a 200-pound athlete, but you like to play the bottom position. I'm going to need a different attribute than you. I like to press the pace; you like to wait for me to make a mistake. Completely different.

LA: Now, is that something that you...how do you address that? How does it begin? I'll just say that. You have a top position, you have a bottom position player.

JB:

JB:

So, you have to look at that athlete. I actually have a questionnaire that my athletes fill out and I ask them what is their favorite positions? Where do they like to fight? That's the exact question I ask them: where do they like to fight? What is their favorite positions? Do they like to push the pace?

I think also, I mean, if you want to use other sports as an example, the positions, like top or bottom, think of a lineman. Does a lineman need the same qualities as quarterbacks? No. No. But, they're playing the same sport. So, I think the problem is we look at a sport and say, they're all Brazilian jujitsu athletes, they need this type of conditioning. No. One, you need to look at that individual athlete, but you also need to look at the position that athlete likes to play, and the game that athlete likes to play within that sport.

Vern Gambetta also has a great thing. He says, "Athlete specific, but sport relevant." It has to be relevant to the sport of Brazilian jujitsu, but athlete-specific.

LA: I think that really points to another thing that I am sort of starting to believe more and more, which is for these individual sports that don't have the infrastructure behind them, the recreational sports I think you called them, is to seek-out people that can really help you. If you didn't study kinesiology or sports science or biomechanics, get some help, because you're probably not going to be able to do it on your own. Bring in an extra. Go find Jason online, something like that. Does that seem to make more and more sense as we go forward?

Yeah, definitely. I think a coach is important in pretty much any area of your life. I mean, we all grew up with coaches. If we're Americans, as kids we had coaches that taught us stuff. I don't it should change just because you're an adult now. If you just started your business, chances are you have a business coach. Your professors in college were in some way a coach. Your jujitsu instructor is a coach.

So, if you're looking to enhance your strength and conditioning or your fitness, I think you should definitely search-out somebody that can help you. And that could be a qualified strength and conditioning coach.

LA: And well within the realm that you're an individual and that it's going to be different. There's just not a roadmap. There's going to be twists and turns and things like that.

JB: Twists and turns, think about everybody... There are some general things that you need to look for, but also, everybody comes into the sport with a different training history, a different injury history. Right? Somebody that just blew an ACL out six weeks is not going to be doing the same thing... I've never had a knee injury, thank God. I'm going to be a little more dynamic than the guy next to me who's just recovering. Should I have the same program as him? You know, maybe elements of this workout can be the same, but it's not going to be the same thing. He's going to be doing more rehab and pre-hab. I'm not.

LA: Right. And that's the stuff that it really helps to have expert advice, because if you're injured, you're not at the same level.

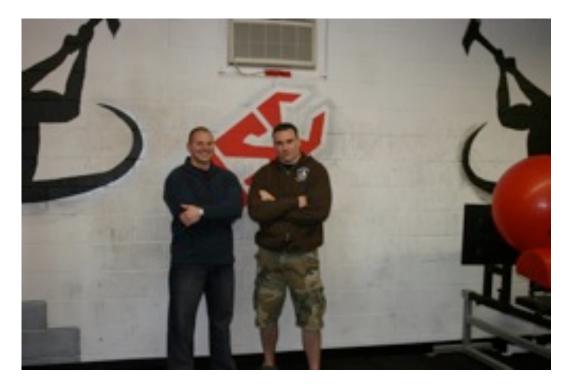
JB: Exactly.

LA: Don't think you know that, go to an expert that can.

I wanted to go back to one other thing. We mentioned the swing and we didn't really touch on it that much. Give people the basics of the swing and maybe explain triple extension and all of that, just in case they're not familiar.

JB: Sure. So, the traditional kettlebell exercises are something called...based off of hip-hinge, which would look very similar... I'm sure your readers and your listeners know of a Romanian deadlift or a good-morning pattern. That is what a swing should look like or be based off of, that movement pattern. Swings are not based off of squats. They are a posterior chain movement. Posterior chain, we're talking about hamstrings. We can talk about the adductors because they're the third strongest hip extensor. We're talking about glutes. We're talking about mid and upper back. And also the erectors, everything on the posterior of your body can be technically considered your posterior chain.

That's what the kettlebell swings are used for, to train that triple extension. Not necessarily triple extension...most swings would be double extension. So, knee and hip. There are some people that come up onto their toes naturally, but when you come up onto your toes, you start to fire the quads a little bit more. People really like to stay grounded on their heels to get their glutes and hamstrings a bit more.



LA: And that's a good distinction, just between the way that some people teach it, certainly.

JB: Yeah. It should definitely... You'll see some top level kettlebell guys, the guys that are competitive in Eastern Europe, the will actually come up onto their toes. And a weird thing that they might do, Luke, sometimes they come up onto the toes of one foot. So, they develop these really...I don't want to say strange, because it works for them. But, it wouldn't be something like we would teach like a volleyball player or a basketball player to do something within a sports conditioning program. It's actually unique to that athlete, which is pretty interesting.

LA: Yeah.

JB: And that's one thing that we spoke about a little bit in the beginning. The kettlebell, this is one reason why I like the kettlebell and dumbbells, also. When training with a barbell, you need to adapt to that barbell. Kettlebells adapt to you. That athlete wants to come up onto one toe, guess what? He can't. Right?

When I bench press with a bar, my shoulder will last maybe four weeks. I can dumbbell bench as heavy as I want, as often as I want. You know? Don't ask me why. But, I've discovered that over 20 years of training.

LA: Sure.

JB: Barbells hurt my shoulders, dumbbells do not.

LA: Yeah, there you go. That's key. One thing I wanted to touch on just in the event that someone has a kettlebell that's maybe a little bit too small for what they need. I know that there are some variations. Are there any variations for the swings, specifically, that you like? Say maybe I'm in between kettlebells and I don't want to go up to the next one. What are some sort of fixes or some sort of short cuts that someone can take?

JB:

LA:

JB:

Yeah, they can always extend... Well, I tell people all the time, you'll never outgrow a smaller kettlebell. There's always something that you can do with that kettlebell. You can do it for mobility work, use it for mobility work. You can include it within a circuit, so it's only one station within a circuit. You could put it...say if you're training for five minutes on and then one minute off. The kettlebell is too light to use by itself, but maybe at that fifth minute, of that five-minute circuit, that weight would be applicable, because you're getting tired by that fifth minute and then maybe that 35-pounds feels pretty good instead of being too light. Right?

So, you'll never outgrow. You can use it for mobility work, you can use it for flexibility work, you can use it as a complex, which is never putting the bell down, and you can switch from swings to cleans to presses, to front squats. Then, a lighter bell is definitely fine.

You can look to increase the speed of the bell. You can look to increase the range of motion. I know you're not a fan of snatches, but you could do something called an extended snatch. Right? We teach vertical snatches with our kettlebells, also. So, we would stand on little plyo-boxes, maybe four to six inches in height, or maybe even like a 45-pound plate so we get another inch out of it, another two inches out of it, and then we do our snatches like that, just increases the amount of knee and hip flexion and a little more drive. There's always a variation that you can do with a lighter bell so you don't necessarily have to move up in weight.

And that's a good thing, because that's something that people sort of get confused and concerned by, a lot of the time. Where do I begin? Where do I end?

Yeah, and I would caution people against that, Luke, because I have personally...in our facility here, we have 72 kettlebells, 72. We have from 4 pounds up to 135 pounds. Don't waste your money on a lot of bells, because to be honest, very rarely are the 70 pound bells, the 32 kilo bells, every used. Definitely, I mean, some people will deadlift, some of the women will deadlift the 80's and the 88's and maybe even the 115's and stuff like that. But, I mean, for the most part, they collect dirt. They collect dust over in the corner of the room.

The 36 pounders, a very popular size for us is the 20 kilo or the 44 pound. Even guys, if you're looking to just use it within a circuit and looking for...the kettlebell is really

a conditioning tool. It's not, we spoke about this earlier, a max strength tool. You don't need to go any heavier than a 20 kilo or a 24 kilo. I think even like a 28 kilo is...unless you're like a 240-pound male, you really don't need it.

LA: Right. Or, you could get into the double movements if you're sort of...

JB: Exactly. Yeah.

JB:

LA: Really coordinated and sadistic and whatnot.

JB: And you can go...something we say, you go deeper into the movement. I'm not sure if you're a fan of Turkish get-ups, but a lot of people rush through the get-up. You can spend a lot of time in each position and just going...sort of make it like yog-ic, if you want to think about it. Spend a lot of time there and just get deeper into the movement instead of rushing through it. And then, I mean, I've seen over 200-pound males in a Turkish get-up get crushed with a 26-pound kettlebell.

LA: Yeah. I'm sure it's possible. I'm sure it will happen again, too. I wouldn't doubt it. That's pretty good.

I think that's about all the questions I had. I want to give you a chance, if people are sort of interested in anything that you said or interested in following-up with you online, how do they do that?

They can go...we have a couple of websites. One is if you're coming more from the kettlebell training world, you can look at <a href="KettlebellAthletics.com">Kettlebell Athletics.com</a>, and everything else is there. If I could just give a shout-out to our YouTube channel, I think our YouTube channel, just look for Kettlebell Athletics on YouTube, I think we have one of the best channels. We have over 200 videos on there, most are workouts an there's a lot of instructional videos as well. Our blog is...I've been a bit lazy at updating it lately, but I think it's one of the best blogs in the business as well, at least in the kettlebell training world.

If you're coming more from the Brazilian jujitsu angle, look at <u>BJJWorkouts.com</u>. And again, I think we have one of the best YouTube channels as well, and all that information is free, of course, because it's YouTube. One of the best YouTube channels regarding conditioning for Brazilian jujitsu. And then I think our blog is one of the best, so <u>BJJWorkouts.com</u>.

LA: Jason, I appreciate the time. Thank you so much.

JB: Hey, man, Luke, thank you. Thanks for having me on and great talking.

LA: All right, take care.

JB: Yep.

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