



<http://www.criticalbench.com/muscle-building-experts.htm>

WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Luke Allison Interviews Kelly Starrett

LA: This is Luke Allison with CriticalBench.com and I'm here with Kelly Starrett. Kelly, how are you?

KS: I'm well. Thanks so much for having me.

LA: Absolutely. I wanted to sort of do something a little different. You're involved with a lot of things and I wasn't exactly sure how to pin that down. So, if you meet someone for the first time, how do you explain to them what you do?



KS: Right, which is a good question. Specifically, if I was sitting in an airplane seat and you ask me what my job was, I would say I'm a strength coach and I'm a physio. And I specialize in kind of finding the inefficiencies and kind of power saps and power bleeds in athletes. Basically, I've been lucky enough to work with a huge kind of cross section of people and been able to kind of understand the similarities and... Sorry, I've got a dog squeaking in the background.

I specialize in kind of seeing where athletes are giving away power and typically how that leads to dysfunction, sometimes it's the dysfunction or pain or problem that kind of initiates the conversation. But, ultimately, it's about how do we get more poundage, wattage, output. That's what it's about.

LA: I noticed that you come from a pretty interesting or at least unique background. You did a lot of rowing and paddling. You were an athlete and you've also been involved with coaching. What has that been like?

KS: Well, I'll tell you what. I used to paddle slalom, white water slalom, which is basically akin to standing in a cold shower and ripping up \$20 bills. It's an esoteric kayaking sport. What's important about that is I had a chance to paddle professionally. I was kind of in the old dogma of we paddled 11 to 13 times a week. We lived...the cross training wasn't very good. The nutrition wasn't very good. Subsequently, I was injured.

I quit racing because my hand was numb and cortisone didn't work and prednisone didn't work. I was asking all the athletes around me, is this normal? Does this happen? All the old national team guys, and they were all like, "Oh, yeah. This always happens." In fact, we were looking around and starting to notice that every girl in the national team when I was racing there had had shoulder surgery, every single woman. In fact, they were like, "Oh, yeah, if you're a woman on the national team, chances are you're going to have shoulder surgery, 100%."

That was really kind of the beginning of putting the pieces together that like...what do you mean? Something is broken here. Why are athletes getting injured squatting? Why are so many broken runners? Where is the kind of disconnect there?

So, it's nice to have come from a background where you understand what it's like to try to put together a life as a competitive athlete, and then what it's like to be injured and how crippling that is. And then, now on the other side, to see how simple it is to kind of prevent those over-use injuries, to recognize the inefficiencies of athletes and keep them in the field or in their sports longer.

More and more, we're finding that it takes a long time to become really, really good at your game. Look at some of our best athletes, in their 20's, late 20's or early 30's. Some of the operators that we work with, the Seals and the Forces guys. It takes a long time to be really, really competent. One of the goals now is if we can avoid injury, if we can put off tissue dysfunction by focusing on performance, then we can keep guys in the NFL longer, we can keep guys on top of their games longer, because it takes a lot of time to get good at these sports.

LA: There seems to be competing ideas about whether it's more beneficial to have coaches that have participated in the sports that they coach, or coaches that come from some sort of pedagogical background or like a sports psychology background, Is that something that you feel comfortable weighing in on?

KS: Well, I tell you, I think there's good coaching wherever that comes from. And certainly, in some of these very, very technical sports, having grown up and around them, it takes a lifetime to collect the information and the skill set and familiarity to be a platform coach.

At the same time, I think that this kind of old model of having one coach that ends up being the resource, the sole resource for all things related to the health and wellness and satisfaction and success of the athlete, I think that's the broken model.

One of the things that we specialize in at our gym is that we work with athletes, lots of different athletes. I think it's that cross section that's dynamic that allows us to see patterns and similarities and pick up things that we might not see if we only worked with lifters or we only worked with power lifters or just worked with runners.

At the same time, it's nice to be able to say, "Hey, I'm not interested in programming. That's between you and your coach." How we manage my goal is to then walk in and say, "What are the missing pieces? How do we get more out of your programming? How are you giving away force and production?" And so many times, as you can experience and I'm sure the listeners can experience, your coach gives you a really crappy nutrition plan. Or, we have really technical rowing coaches who are fantastic and world champs and all these things, but can't necessarily program strength and conditioning.

So, finding people who are really good and kind of creating a community and a cross section, I think, is the real strength. Even if you look at the content of Critical Bench, for example, or any good kind of strength and conditioning community. You're trying to bring in lots of voices that understand that there's a great deal of mutual accommodation between systems, but that it's better to find experts who understand what you're doing and can assist in what you're doing than trying to be one person doing it all. Is that a fair enough answer?

LA: Absolutely. It sounds like that sort of begins to lay the foundation for why you transitioned into physical therapy. Is that right?

KS: Yeah, absolutely. I remember being a young national team kid and literally having a conversation with an reigning Olympic gold medalist about what to eat for breakfast. He's like, "You know, I just don't feel like my breakfast works." You're like, you're the best in the world. And weak and having shoulder problems. Sometimes when we tap into the communities of the people of just unreal genetics, who come through good programs early-on, they have the muscle memory, the control, the long-time training and they're genetic freaks. When you see those big holes like that it's easy to walk through.

The advantage then, for the rest of us mortals is that we can kind of distill down away from, okay, I'm never going to have that genetic freakiness, that quality. What are the best practices and the how do we do that? But, more importantly, what I think we're really having a conversation about is how do we build complete athletes? How do we empower athletes to know what's going on, to be empowered to take care of their

business, to recognize their bad positioning, to understand that boy, you've got to be hydrated. You've got to watch your nutrition. You've got to watch your inflammation. The details and margins are smaller and smaller.

The difference between first place and gold medal and world champion and 5th or 10th is tiny. It's a few pounds, it's a few kilos, it's a few wattages, a few seconds. I think we've seen a lot more kind of growing sophistication in growing with the kind of advent of the internet community. People are sharing ideas and lots of cars are going really fast now. People have figured out really quickly.

I mean, my mom knows what Westside conjugate training is. You know? That's really weird. She eats gluten-free and takes the stinky distilled oil from a weird arctic fish. That's weird. So, if my mom is doing that, and my wife is doing that, and even my daughter knows what to eat and what not to eat. We've got to pay attention to all these details.

So, when we see athletes giving away huge amounts of force and not even knowing it, then that's a failure of kind of our system, our coaching. What we're trying to do is just... I don't think we know what's possible as human beings. We're going to get there. The details are getting smaller and smaller, but I think that's what's at stake.

LA: I wanted to ask sort of why physical therapy. Obviously there are a lot of different avenues if you're interested in sort of sports performance. I mean, you could have become a medical doctor with residence sort of research in biochemistry and things like that. Why did you choose what you did?

KS: Well, it's such a fair question, and if you've had the experience of inept physical therapy or bad chiropractic or bad whatever rehab model, certainly you would think going into physical therapy isn't the key. I chose my school because it specialized in this Australian approach to manual therapy, which is kind of this very hardcore, hands-on, very manual approach. And when I saw it was really this kind of heavy duty manual, physical contact, movement-based approach and it really jived with what I understood as an athlete.

What I realized was that as a competitor, et cetera, et cetera, I had never gotten what I needed from the physios that I was working with and I saw that there was a better way to kind of integrate these things.

I think the real... I've recently come up with this idea of this is the way that I would recommend you find a physician, you find a physical therapist, you find someone. We get asked this question all the time. How do I know this is a good physical therapist or doctor? And I'm like, the answer is, you ask them how much they deadlift. Straight up.

I think the problem is that we haven't had enough physio strength coaches. We haven't enough strength coach physios out there. So, when I saw the interface between movement effectiveness, heavy lifting, athleticism and then really understanding that there was kind of a real interplay between what I could accomplish as a physio by changing tissue position, changing joint position, better integration, better organization of the athlete manually, it was just like a no-brainer.

It felt like I was the only physio out there picking up heavy things. And which, of course, is not the case. But, we're finding out more and more that it's a real nice way to kind of see the world. I think physical therapists have a unique training background or education background that they can potentially apply in a more effective way.

More importantly, if you are Olympic lifting and training and running and sprinting, you can really understand what the mechanics are, and then, you have this really great tool set and theoretical legitimacy to be able to teach people how to manage themselves. We have just failed people miserably in that you can squat 800 pounds. You're Mark Bell and you can bench 900 pounds. And lo and behold, it turns out you're missing some external rotation and flexion and why do you have to go see your doctor? Not that he's done this, but when you have knee pain, can you not deal with your knee pain? You have to go see your physician, your physician sends you to physical therapist. And all along, you just have a tight anterior hip, your quads are really short, you've got bad mechanics. If you could address those things or be able to perform the basic maintenance on yourself, you cut out 19 different steps and you go faster.

So, I think that's the real issue is that being a physio, I found that I could be in a position to show athletes how to treat themselves and more importantly, how to get more out of their training. Because, man, we are just inefficient.

LA: I think that's a good explanation of improvement. I think a lot of peoples' experience is probably pretty similar to what you described, where they go to an orthopedic surgeon and he wants to cut on things with an arthroscope. That's not really what a lot of people want to do. So, they're looking for anything else, usually.

KS: That's right, and it's not the surgeon's fault. When you've worn a hole in your knee cap because you've got bad mechanics... Let's just say your quads are tight, your over extended, you've got this neurogenic clamping down of your muscles. Or, just your calves are tight, you get early compression in your knees. You have crap hip mobility. And suddenly, you've worn a hole in your knee cap. Right?

Well, imagine that you go see your doctor and the doctor's like, "Dude, you've got to stop squatting." You're like, "Hell, no. I'm not going to stop squatting. I'm the best. This is... You can't keep me down." What the physician is really saying is, "Hey, I've noticed you've worn a hole in your knee cap doing what you're doing and that's got to

stop. You've herniated your discs. You've broken your back. We can help you, I don't know what to do to change the mechanics." That's where we're starting to see the interface.

Athletes are sophisticated. We're much more sophisticated than we were five years ago, ten years ago. Twenty years ago is the dark ages. Not that guys weren't brutally strong ten years ago, but what we're seeing now is that people are...they're smart about how they train and the drugs we use and how we recover.

I mean, in some of my seminars, I ask how many people have taken an ice bath in the last week, and fifty percent of the hands go up. I mean, that's insanity. We're getting smarter about taking care of these details. By the time you've worn a hole in your knee or destroyed your labrum in your shoulder or torn your rotator cuff, you've literally had to wake up every day and be like, today's the day. I'm going to end my rotator cuff today.

You're designed, as a human being, to be pain-free. You're designed as a human being to be ridden hard and put away wet. At the same time, so by the time something has popped its head up, that you're having pain and dysfunction, you've had to work really hard at it. And with that poundages and the wattages and the outputs that people are doing, what we're seeing now, I see more and more, is guys and gals, when they develop a speed wobble, it's not a big deal when they were doing 10 miles an hour. But, now they're doing 150 miles an hour and that speed wobble causes the wheel to fly off. That's why the details really start to matter more and more.

LA: That's well beyond the conscious part that you can correct.

KS: Right, I mean, look at any of the sports that we're all interested in. You bring up rowing. We work with a lot of rowers. The pain button is broken. They just don't feel pain. They suffer. That's what happens.

Take any strength athlete and the intense suffering and soreness that goes along with that sport. It's difficult for us to critically assess. Am I brutally sore? Am I doing damage? The issue is that it's really easy to see.

What's really important for athletes to understand is that issues of mobility and position, issues of tissue health and safety are really issues of performance. When we get the athlete in the most organized way, we eliminate sheer, we eliminate early compression, we optimize all the joint health, all the things that theoretically we should care about, we go faster.

If we focus on the performance first, that's how we know the other stuff works. Why should I care about your hip mobility? Well, not because you theoretically may or

may not herniated a disc, it's because if we open up your hip mobility, man, your poundage goes up, your wattage goes up. That's how we know it works.

So, we've taken this issue of some theoretical ideal of how much range of motion I need to saying, hey, what compromises are you not consciously making, or are you unconsciously making, and then we change your hip position, get you into a better position. We can see that change not in some qualitative thing, but in a quantitative change in wattage and power and et cetera, et cetera.

We work with...we get cyclists and what do they care about? They care about wattage. So, we can demonstrate. We get them into a better position, they go faster. That's what speaks. And at the same time, my physical therapist itself is like, hey, I've protected that knee. I've protected that back, now I got that athlete going. But, the only thing we should ever care about is hot, dirty, nasty performance. That's what we've failed to do.

I'll give you an example. Imagine if you were...everyone knows that they should floss their teeth. Right? Did you floss? You're like, I know I should floss. The reason you should floss is you don't want to lose your teeth, maybe in 20 years. Right?

What if I said if you flossed your teeth, you'd put 40 pounds on your deadlift? You'd set a world record. You'd floss obsessively. The key is that we've never taken issues of joint positioning, joint mobility, tissue health and framed it in the context of things that are important to athletes: power, wattage, performance, recovery.

We've always said, well, wait until you're injured or having a problem. Now, we triage that instead of saying, how do we optimize the athlete? How do we prevent force from being bled? How do we keep athletes in the field longer and competing longer? That is the shift that's starting to happen, and I think people are getting it. We really are getting it.

We start MobilityWOD as kind of a love note and a love poem, just to give athletes a jumpstart. We're like 1.5 million visits. It's insane. Obviously we didn't know where to start with this thing. And then, people are smart enough that they start to get it and then they remember the things that work and that it takes so little input. If you're going to obsess about what you eat and how you train and you fly out and train with this coach. Take a room full of athletes, how many people in here have watched an internet lifting video in the last 24-hours. You'll notice 90% of the hands. That's weird and obsessive.

So, showing someone how they can open their hips on five minutes, I mean, that's no big deal. You know?

LA: Yeah. Definitely. I wanted to sort of transition a little bit, but there's a tendency to view weight training through the lens of whatever sport we participate in. And I'm curious. If that's the only way to orientate ourselves or if there's another way possibly.

KS: Well, I think we're smart enough now and savvy enough now that hopefully people are moving away from seeing weight training as kind of some theoretical thing, eight sets of three to ten reps, things they need to do. Boy, it's a really excellent way to develop power, facilitate strength and build field strength.

It's interesting. A lot of times there's a lot of discussion that gets sidetracked, I think, when we're talking about the nuances of what's the best way to train and elite powerlifter. What's the best way to train and Olympic lifter? How much metabolic conditioning do they need? Is it too much volume?

When we're talking about the weight training for the athlete, we're looking at how do we use strength and conditioning for actual sports that don't include just the weight training. Almost anything works, because what ends up happening is you can use any one of these movements at movement screens. You don't have to perform movement screen like I can tell a lot about you as soon as I watch you deadlift, as soon as I watch you squat, soon as I watch you press. I'm pretty much going to know who you are and where you fail.

But, more importantly, as you know as a coach, as soon as you get your hands on an Olympic rower, you throw them into a pushup and you throw them into a press, they're just glaring holes. It's a lot more simple than I think people realize. It almost does...it doesn't matter and more importantly if it's a question about programming, what we're interested in is the system that works, and I think a lot of systems work. How do we get our athletes to perform enough work where they see change in output and wattage and that's the thing that matters.

One of our athletes is on the National Rowing Team. She's a world champion, Olympic medalist, winning the first gold medal in the pair, et cetera, et cetera, phenomenal athlete. We've got her doing some triples on squatting. She was a little bit bummed out that she hadn't made progress on her triples between testing. Yet, she PR'ed on a 6K rowing test by 12 seconds, a lifetime PR.

She was really disappointed because she felt like she wasn't getting any stronger. We were excited because she wasn't getting weaker, she was showing performance gains in the things that she needed to be showing performance gains in, and she's able to buffer all that training.

So, I think it's got to be about outputs and then pretty much, it all works at some point. The issue is then, what specifically are you doing? Man, you've got to get people

pulling wides. You've got to keep box-squatting. We get in our little dogmas. Is it high bar; is it low bar? It's squatting, and you need to keep mixing it up.

LA: This is sort of weird, and I want to try real hard not to geek-out for a second here. But, one of the thoughts that came up was, I don't know that I trust people or myself to sort of self-select their sport. What comes to mind is the Russian progress, the process of attaining sports mastery where basically kids did gymnastics and coordination and proprioception and things like that and then a coach said you do this at like 12 or 13. What do you think about something like that?

KS: Well, first of all, I have two daughters. My wife is a two-time world champion whitewater paddler and she was a National Champion. You inherit your mitochondria from your mother. So, my kids can suffer. They're just going to be... They can suffer. They have some...they move well and they're involved in gymnastics programs. What's interesting probably is that when you put the right framework on kids and you give them the education and you teach them to squat and to jump and to run, which are all technical skills, and they do gymnastics and they do kind of body aware control stuff. Then chances are...and have good genetics, right? Any sport you put them in, they're probably going to be successful in, given that they like it, they're motivated by it, they have good coaching.

If you talked to a lot of people, let's take John Welbourn, NFL, ten-year player, cross-fit football guy. He was a monster early-on. When he was playing little league football and into high school, his mom would ask him every day, every meal, "Do you want two pancakes or three?" So, he ate two or three pancakes every meal, trying to be big and pretty soon, he kind of self-selected, strong kid, very motivated, very interested, good coaching, turns out to be an NFL monster.

Then the question is really, how do you prepare child/teen athletes to be successful in any sport that they choose and how do you set them up so that we just don't grind them down, so that these kids aren't just destroyed. I think underneath what you're hearing is I like paddling, some of these other things, but how do I prepare my daughters to make the choices and give them the physical education that really kind of sets them up to make the decisions that they want to make?

One of the really interesting things that's happening is we're seeing more and more really good local centers of strength and conditioning. There are 2,000 Crossfits and lots and lots of strength coaching, really good strength coaches in there. Super Training is really close to us. I can go train with Mike Burgener. You're out on the East Coast and you find Zach Evanish and you're like, holy crap.

So, there's all these really amazing centers. And imagine suddenly now there's this return to, how do we make general physically prepared kids? How do we have this

kind of Soviet-style feeder program that creates super athletes? I mean, if you're a Sage Burgener or one of Mike Burgener...Olympic lifting superstar. My mentor, Mike Burgener's kids, chances are you're going to grow up around Olympic lifting and it's natural and that's what happens. You've already self-selected for it.

Is it impossible to program for a kid? I'll tell you that my daughter Georgia got a javelin for her 4th birthday. She has gymnastics and she does dance and we're starting with jiu-jitsu here. She's five-and-a-half. So, what's that look like? I think it's the classic education in fitness that I think we all wish we had and probably didn't have.

LA: Sure. Definitely. I want to see if I can bridge a gap that I'm seeing forming here. There was an episode of the MobilityWOD, it was 53. It was October of last year. It talked about a couple of things that I want to maybe expand on a little bit. It talked about no days off, so doing something every 24-hours. Small, aggregate pieces, and then you mentioned the 11 to 13 workouts per week while you were on the paddling national team.

KS: So, let's pull that first piece off. Either it's a type-one thinking error or we're not organized in our thinking or we're not paying attention, but off days of training, when we say there are no days off, I think what we were trying to say is that recovery is more important than the training stimulus. The person who can perform the most work and be the freshest wins every time.

So, when I say there can't be any days off, that means on your day off, it's mobility. You're out maybe pulling the sled. You've dialed your nutrition in perfectly. You don't sit at your desk 19-hours a day and close your hips down and end up dehydrated and behind, and you fell behind on your nutrition. There just can't be that error. As we start to pay attention more and more to the details of what really elite performance is and how we're going to really reset what's possible with all the modern training, GNC's down the street and the fact that everyone has chains and bands and is doing all this crazy training. How do we kind of manage that?

And one of the ways we manage it is that you have to absolutely be thinking, you can't be sloppy on the off days and that every single time that you and I are training for world championships, the guy who's thinking about the details more obsessively is likely going to win.

I work with some really, really good cyclists and they have these...the details...they monitor their sleep quality with these head things. They use these special mouth guards that have them sleep in a better jaw position. They use these high compression devices that compress all the swelling in tissue out of their legs. They're sort of mini-obsessed with these details that allow them to go out and train that hard. So, that's the first I think we were saying.

The 11 to 13 workouts a week, could I handle that much training? Yes, until I couldn't. Until my body fell apart because I wasn't doing the things that I needed to do to support that: my nutrition wasn't as good as it is now. I didn't strength train as effectively as I do now, and I couldn't see the things that I was missing and no wonder my hand went numb. I mean, I deserved that. I was just a mess. I was a hot mess.

Floyd Landis, who is that great cyclist, he said whoever trains the hardest, wins. And someone's like, what about overtraining? He's like, well if you overtrained then you obviously didn't train hard enough to be able to train that hard, see rule number one.

I think that's the key, how do we get enough stimulus? We're volume happy over here. How do we get enough stimulus to get good results and not enough more. Right?

LA: One of the things that I think comes up again is, say you're getting six to eight workouts a week in. It may be a matter of what your sport is, maybe it doesn't. But, it seems like the only way to really take-off those other five to six workouts is either specific sports preparedness or some kind of skill work. Does that seem correct?

KS: Oh, yeah. There are some notions, I think, sometimes in training communities where you don't have to do your sport if you're well conditioned in the gym. Several of those workouts are very skill-based. I think the idea kind of gets convoluted a little bit when you think about weight lifting. The Romanians trained twice a day and the Chinese...it's heavy every single... But, absolutely. This is the art of coaching, of course.

Having athletes that are prepared enough and are not working the margins of their capacities in terms of tissue tolerance, low back, whatever. If you've prepared athletes enough, when we're talking about the highest levels... My rowers are going to do two workouts a day, no matter what. And maybe, with some of our girls, we do three workouts a day. But, that third workout is 20 minutes. It's a recovery piece where we get them on the water and it's a technique session. It doesn't tax them.

You're absolutely right. I think it has to be that sport specific stuff and it's not necessarily all of that heavy, heavy, gnarly end-range training. We all know people who just augered-in. It's always a surprise. I don't know what happened. I just...just caught this flu. I just got crushed. What happened? My knee blew-up. You're like, you've been setting yourself up for that for three weeks now, end of a hard training cycle. Is that a good enough answer?

LA: Absolutely. I'm trying to develop something which I think is probably beyond my grasp, but I'm working really hard. I see a lot of people, they're in the gym, they're busting their ass, they're in there three or four days a week. But, what I think I'm

realizing is that it's simply not enough. There's no way that you can work hard enough in those amount of sessions to sort of rise above. Yeah, you can maybe stave off parts of these or something like that or whatever. But, you're not really going to start outperforming people.

KS: No.

LA: I'm not sure what the...sort of where the movement is. Because, it seems like you're talking about building communities. Well, I'm not in high school. I'm not doing power cleans with the football team anymore. How are we, as individuals, sort of recreating these communities?

KS: Sure. Well, I think the first thing is that it's difficult to train alone and try to do this by yourself without a coached environment. So, getting a coach or some coaching of some kind really is...that's tricky. If you're not coaching, then obsessively working with other coaches when you can, trying to create that atmosphere of like a coached environment.

I think it was Louie Simmons that said, "I've been coached with ever set of squats I've ever done my whole life, ever." Olympic lifters create Olympic lifting teams and clubs. Super Training has...if you want to train with them, if you want to train with Mark Bell, all you have to do is show up and bust your ass. I think there's a lot of that sort of thing there.

The question is, if that law of diminishing returns, maybe used to be that Jim Schmitz trained some really, really strong national champions in Olympic lifting three days a week and it was 2 ½ hours, three days a week, and that was enough with his program back then with the genetics. Probably, chances are, you can make good gains. But, if you're talking about really being the best athlete on the planet in your sport, it's probably going to take more than three or four days a week. it's probably six days a week, and some of those are little mini workouts.

We completely advocate for the home gym. You have to have a full setup at home, and it doesn't take much. Get some bumpers. You can get a great squat rack from Rogue or York Fitness, real simple squat cage. You don't need the best bar in the world. I think it sets you up for being able to have that programming option, to be able to kind of get that.

We have a sled and a tire we drag up and down the street in front of our house. And how do you get those little details in? I think a lot of really good programs have moved towards, let's have more frequent, more intense sessions that the athlete can recover from.

Louie's guys are in and out of the gym in an hour, plus, around. You know? That's pretty bad ass. I think there are a lot of models that we can get our athletes moving effectively in and out of the gym, warmed-up and then take the mobility piece of ten minutes in front of the TV. Let's take something else, your nutrition is another workout, kind of idea. I think that's what's happened.

If you look at the weight lifting community, the number of blogs, I mean, if you can't find a community that supports you and you're not seeing progress, then ask what's up. Because, as long as you're making good gains, the question is, what's enough gains? Are you in the right place? But, as long as you're moving forward, it's working.

LA: Progress is the key.

KS: That's right.

LA: There were two ideas, and not necessarily questions. I thought about, as soon as you can afford something, then they give it to you for free. The idea of being a resident athlete like at the Olympic training center, like where you have food, accommodations, you have free body work and you're taken care of. It's like, well, I'm working and I'm training real hard and I'm trying to get there, but then when I make it have all of the things taken care of. So, it's this weird dichotomy. Is that anything that you have experience with?

KS: Well, I think that we have some kind of a notion about a theoretical utopia where we train. You know? Maybe that happens one time in your life. But, I tell you, I know a lot of world champions who are grad students, work hard, police officers, can still be really good, they just have to work around it. They're strength and conditioning coaches. They're working coaches.

I think what's nice now is that if you eat clean...there are whole foods on the corner and you can probably eat better yourself than you can if someone cooked dinner for you. I think there's a romantic notion of being a monk athlete, but I think the more robust athletes have normal lives, they have relationships. They train around their children. I think it's possible to kind of have that. And I'll tell you what, having health insurance and not being critically poor and having to send your picture of the Powerbar sticker on your helmet to the Powerbar to get your \$20... You know. That's a terrible life.

I just think that the training is so efficient now that you can kind of do all of those things without have to kind of hit some magical thing and arrive there. Maybe it's just because I'm on the other side and I'll never be great at anything ever again, comma. You know? But, I think we do it better at our gym than you could get at the Olympic

training center, except for the national level team coaching. You're going to get the strength and conditioning coaching and there are places where people can find this. You're going to get the physio, you're going to get the nutrition stuff. And now, you're free to move around the country and do what you need to do. If you want to go do a camp at the Olympic training center, that's great.

LA: I think it's just a matter of, like you said, what your utopia, what's your idea, what gets you out of bed, what gets the 12 sessions a week done. What are the sort of switches that you flip every so often?

KS: I think it's hard work. And if anyone's known who... If you're just a recreational strength athlete, it's hard work. You're potentially getting up in the middle of the night to eat and managing these details. It's hard and we have a ton of recreational Olympic lifters around us who are very serious. They're passionate. It's their hobby. We have a lot of recreational rowers around us who kind of obsess over these details. Are you making progress? Are you not making kind of those type-one errors that you're giving a lot away and a lot of your training inefficiency away. I think as long as those two kind of concepts are met, then you're going to be okay. If the best coach in the world is the coach at the Olympic training center, well, I guess you're going to have a figure out a way to be there or at least move around there for the sacrifice thing.

I think the internet has just given us carte blanche for understanding what the best in the world are doing. What does that really mean to me as a stay-at-home dad? My wife is an attorney and I have three kids. You just get the idea as a metaphor. There is a way to train effectively, even just if you look at the New York Times or Wall Street Journal just did the article about the divorce rates among endurance athletes. Oh, my God. It's just hard for people to do five hours of running. That's the compromise you're going to make.

LA: Right. It's difficult to have it all as you begin to sort of walk your own path and whatnot.

To pull back for a second, get a little bit less serious, do you feel like there's a danger that you might actually make physical therapy cool?

KS: No. No way. Not cool, but sexy. Again.

LA: Okay.

KS: And the reason is, what I hope to do is invent toilet paper. That everyone needs toilet paper. What we've done, or what I've done, hopefully, is show people that the basic concepts of ideal joint position, good setup, minimizing your meniscus is the way to go faster. God forbid we ever empower our athletes.

I'm starting to get athletes who come to me now who are like, "Hey, Kelly. I've worked upstream and downstream with the problem. I've tried to mobilize the capsule. I don't think this is a sliding surface problem and I'm pretty sure I'm organized. What do you think it is?" As a physio I'm like, that's amazing. We can get some work done. That's an enlightened athlete. "I'm managing my inflammation. I'm not dehydrated. I've got good tissue health. What do you think it is? I've been icing obsessively." At that point, you can just...so many things are taken off the table and that's an athlete who understands how to get into good position, how to recover, what to do to mobilize to improve their position. That's what's happened.

I'll tell you, people have been very, very generous only in so much, I think, is that they've gotten good results and they've seen improvements in their power. If you take someone's pain away, that's great and they remember that. But, if you get them a PR you're their god, with a little "g" of course. I mean, that's what we're doing.

How do we flip this on its head and say, look, I should not be the only arbiter and the resource. The physios on the street should be the guys saying like, "Why don't you just put a lacrosse ball in your butt and roll around on it?" Why is that voodoo? Why should that cost you \$150 for a session?

LA: Great questions. I'm not entirely sure I would have the answer to that, but it's worth working towards, certainly.

KS: It's hard to be an expert in everything. Right? It really is hard to be an expert. The project of the MobilityWOD is, I think people, they've got enough psychic energy for 4-6 minute lesson a day and they can do 10 minutes of stretching.

I learned something when my wife, who's the best athlete in the family, we're always kind of having this bickering. I'm like, "Dude, you've got to be taking care of your tight hips." She's like, "I just want to lay here and stretch. You stretch me and..." "That's not how it works." You know, we get in these fights, these mini fights. And the one day I came in, we'd been doing the MobilityWOD for like two weeks or something and I came home and I was like, "What are you doing?" She's like, "I'm doing the MobilityWOD." She's like, "It's right there. It's totally easy. I understand it." I'm like, "Hon, you filmed me in doing the MobilityWOD in our garage." She's like, "I know, but now it's on the internet and I can totally watch it and it's easy."

I knew that's what we needed. We needed coaching. I think the second kind of take away, sometimes, the coach notion...it's really hard to coach yourself. You really need a good coach. Go find a good coach. Make a commitment to coaching each other, but don't fool yourself. You've got to have a coach on all these things. And it's easy, it's cheap, it's out there.

LA: Absolutely. I've definitely taken-up a lot of your time, but I wanted to give you a chance. If people are interested in looking you up or coming to see you, anything like that, let them know how to get in touch with you.

KS: Right. If you happen to be in San Francisco, we own [San Francisco Crossfit](#). Come bring us your huddled, beat-up, trashed shoulders, we'll show you that there's always potential to be had. If you're having a hard time hitting that split jerk or you want to go faster, come train with our coaches and then figure it out. Take a crack at it yourself. Go to [MobilityWOD.com](#). There are so many great resources on the internet now. I go to Super Training, I live at Westside, I look at [Cressey's](#) stuff. There are just so many really good thinkers and you should just make a commitment that once or twice a week you just spend a half-hour going around and educate yourself.

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

KS: My pleasure. Thank you so much.

LA: All right, take care.

Not a Subscriber? Get 5 Free Interviews For A Buck Just For Trying Out the CriticaBench.com Weekly Muscle Building Expert Interview Series. – [CLICK HERE](#)



FOUNDER & HEAD COACH

Kelly Starrett

Coach Kelly Starrett founded San Francisco CrossFit with his wife and fellow athlete Juliet. Since opening its doors in 2005 as one of the first 50 CrossFit Affiliates, this athletic training center has become the prime coaching resource for reigning Olympians, national and world champions, tri-athletes, runners, and recreational athletes alike. Kelly's focused coaching and warm personality brings his professional training as a strength coach and a doctor of physical therapy to life for brilliant coaching in a positive environment. Kelly is an inspiration to nearly everyone he meets, causing even superior athletes to re-examine their physical capacities and reach higher levels, and motivating beginners to believe in their natural ability to excel.

Kelly received his Doctor of Physical Therapy in 2007 from Samuel Merritt College in Oakland, California. Before starting his own physical therapy practice at San Francisco CrossFit, he practiced performance-based physical therapy at the world-renowned Stone Clinic. In current practice, Kelly continues to focus on performance-based Orthopedic Sports Medicine with an emphasis on returning athletes to elite level sport and performance. His clients see exceptional results from his progressive blend of manual physical therapy and strength training. Kelly's clients have included Olympic gold-medalists, world-class extreme skiers and X-Games medalists, dancers with Smuin, San Francisco, and Sacramento Ballet Companies, military personnel, and competitive age-division athletes.

Kelly has also served as the strength and conditioning coach for the Marin Rowing Association high school rowing program where he helped lead the varsity girls to a national title in 2008. He is also proud to have served as strength coach to reigning rowing Olympic gold medalist Erin Cafaro, in preparation for her success in the 2008 Beijing Olympiad.

Kelly's background as an athlete and coach includes paddling whitewater slalom canoe on the US Canoe and Kayak Teams, and leading the Men's Whitewater Rafting Team to two national titles and competition in two World Championships. In his free time Kelly enjoys spending time with his two daughters, Georgia and Caroline, surfing, paddling, Olympic lifting, and dancing.