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WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Ryan Magin, Mike Mahler, Steve Cotter

RM: All right guys, once again I want to thank you guys for coming on the line tonight. I've got an exciting call with Steve Cotter and Mike Mahler, and they're going to be going into all things kettlebell.

I want to introduce them real quick. Again, my name is Ryan Magin from MuscleGainingExperts.com. And you can get this teleseminar and many more just by doing to that website.

So, Steve is the president and founder of the International Kettlebell and Fitness Federation, the world's leading educational provider for kettlebell training and mind/body fitness, with certified trainers on every continent. Author of the most comprehensive DVD and book ever published on the subject of kettlebell lifting. He's personally trained and consulted to NFL, NHL and all major league baseball teams, as well as prestigious

military groups including US Navy Seals and the US Marines. For more information on Steve, go to www.IKFF.com.

And Mike, Mike is a fitness information provider based in Las Vegas, Nevada. He's been a kettlebell instructor since 2002 and is currently researching the field of hormone optimization and is working on a new book, Live Life Agressively: What Self-Help Gurus Don't Want You to Know. For more info on Mike, go to www.MikeMahler.com.

And I'll let you guys take it away.



MM: Well, thanks a lot Ryan, and I just want to remind everyone to check out your excellent website. You have a lot of great interviews archived. So, thanks again for hosting this call. And Steve, thanks a lot for taking time out of your schedule to get on the call.

SC: Thank you very much, Ryan and Mike. It's a pleasure, guys.

MM: Well, Steve, let's start off by talking about your athletic background and also how you got into strength and conditioning for people that may not be familiar with your background.

SC: In general, I was always inquisitive as a kid, played baseball, got into martial arts when I was 12, and that became my real passion. It consumed me. I trained martial arts pretty much religiously for about 15 years, into my late 20's. Along the way I was really into the conditioning and the body-hardening and just the flexibility and just really sort of the whole mind/body comprehensive training that's associated with some of the martial arts systems.

Late on in adulthood, I realized that I didn't want to try to earn a living teaching martial arts my whole life, because I thought that it watered it down too much to make it a business. So, I started looking into doing more things with athletes and strength and conditioning and just kind of went from there and just explored the entire field of strength and conditioning.

MM: Right. What kind of training were you doing for yourself to stay in shape before you got into kettlebell training?

SC: Well, there was a period of time, of about three years, where I was in college full time, taking almost a double load, lots of units, studying sports science. So, for that period of time, I really wasn't doing a lot of exercise at all. I might ride my bike to college and back. And that was a change for me, because for 15 years prior to that I was exercising all the time, pretty much all day, every day.

So, I had a really strong foundation from just thousands of reps of more body weight type of training, kind of animal based movements, a lot of leg training, a lot of pushups and calisthenics. So, that was sort of my foundation.

But, before I found kettlebells, there was the three-year period where I really wasn't doing a lot of training at all, and just kind of running on reserves. And that was the whole reason that actually got me interested in kettlebell lifting, because I went from being a highly conditioned athlete to being a guy carrying a backpack, starting to feel like a regular person. And I didn't like that feeling.

MM: That's really interesting that you were able to maintain a good level of fitness just based on everything you had done previously, before that.

SC: Well, I think that over the course of your life, I think that quality reps really matter, and you can kind of look at it like a savings account. And if you put a lot in and you don't spent a lot at the beginning, then later in life you can kind of afford to splurge a

little bit and you're still going to have a reservoir. You're still going to have some money left over because you weren't spending it maybe when everyone else was.

So, it's kind of like that. I built a deep reservoir. I started at a young age, and so, I'm a big proponent of getting children moving and getting children into studying the arts and athletics. Because, adults, if you start later in life, you've already accumulated some bad habits. You've already accumulated some postural discrepancies and children, a lot of times, they're not that...they're not messed-up yet. A lot of times they pretty much are very flexible. So, that was a big advantage for me, starting when I was still 12. I was still malleable and I was able to really develop good habits from a young age. And that has held me over, throughout my life since then, as well. Kind of a little goes a long way.

MM: Yeah, kind of reminds me of Larry Fedorenko were he went through a long period when he moved to the US of not training with kettlebells. I don't know how long. Maybe a couple of years.

SC: He's a prime example, yeah. For sure.

MM: And when he picked them up he was still able to perform at a really high level, just from all the years experienced that he had.

SC: He was able to outperform people that were training all the time that had just learned kettlebells later in life. Because basically, it's almost as if it's in the DNA at that point. You're doing it from such a young age that your cells just absorb it. It also has to do with the motor learning, more than anything else. Your children are malleable, but not just physically. They're also emotionally and mentally malleable. So, one of the things I learned with martial art training is that the enemy is doubt and it's really doubt that holds people back. And children naturally do not have as much doubt. I think doubt is something we learn, and that's evidenced by kids doing crazy things, whether it's skaters or jumping off of roofs and things like that. Things that adults would be terrified to even consider, kids do for fun.

So, that doubt is really what holds people back and in adulthood, when we're learning new things, we've already accumulated a lot of doubt based on previous experience and failures. So, it's a lot harder to get natural. And when you take someone like myself in the martial arts or Larry Fedorenko with the kettlebells, and you start them at a young age, they really haven't learned a lot of bad habits yet. So, they're able to really just make progress. That's why it can stick with a guy like Fedorenko, because he achieved mastery at such a young age.

MM: Those are really interesting points, because a lot of people start training when they're adults. And if they go through a period, even just a couple of months where

they're not working out regularly, they lose a lot of strength and fitness. That's very common. But, the point I think you're bringing that's really fascinating is the fact that if you start training at a very young age and you develop that quality over a long timeframe, you can go through those periods where maybe you're not training that much or maybe not even at all, and still maintain a high level of training and fitness. So, that's really interesting.

Also, I think it brings the point of the importance of focusing on quality. The quality of workouts is really important where you're developing those high level skill sets as well. And I think you'll be able to maintain that strength and conditioning in a down time if you develop the quality first.

SC: I agree with that, completely, because it's... I like to say that a thousand imperfect reps are not as good as one perfect rep. You're better doing something perfectly one time than a thousand times incorrectly. Because, at the end of the day, if you keep doing it incorrectly, it doesn't matter how many reps you do, you still end up with something that is wrong.

MM: Right.

SC: So, it's kind of that less is more idea that it's better to less well than more poorly.

MM: I think that's a really good point, too. Because what's popular in the training world now is basically stimulus type training where the focus is on really just burning yourself out and feeling wiped-out after a workout, and very little emphasis on proper technique and just mastering the skill of training. I think what happens there is people end up breaking themselves down more than someone who doesn't even workout, rather than building themselves up with the proper stimulus and the proper technique.

SC: Correct. There is an ego motivation there. A lot of times we may not be aware of it. But, I think a lot of folks in fitness that come into it as adults, they still have in the mind that they're going to approach it as if they're a professional athlete or particularly the stimulus junkies that you're talking about, whether it's cross training for time or whatever the system is.

It's important to realize that if we're, as adults, doing exercise and fitness, that it has to be part of an overall program that the goal should really be health and wellbeing and feeling good. I think the goal should not be how fast you can do this event or that event. Because, at the end of the day, you're not a professional athlete. You're not getting paid for it. So, stop pretending and pay attention to the rest of your life and just be fit, because it's healthy to be fit, instead of trying to compare or compete with the other 30 and 40-year-olds in your office.

It's good to have a healthy ego, but I think it can get out of hand with the fitness. It becomes more about just pushing yourself and less about really what maybe what your body needs. That's just my analysis. It's not a criticism, but I think it's something people have to be careful of when they get gung-ho about a fitness program. You've got to keep it in perspective, because it's your whole life. It's how it fits into your whole life over the course of time, not just how lean you can get your body for, say, a month or a week.

MM: Right. The four hours that you're spending each week training is now your entire life and I think the mistake some people make is, they have a low level of confidence before they start working out. And then, when they start getting into a higher level of fitness, they develop confidence, but only within the context of their workouts. So, they're much better in the gym, they're much better in their workouts, they do well there. But, they never carryover those skills anywhere else. It doesn't improve their career or their family life or anything like that. So, they really miss out, in my opinion, on the real benefits of physical conditioning where you learn so much about yourself that you can carry over to other arenas.

SC: Great point. Agreed. That's where the value is, in my opinion, because if you're good in the gym and you can't apply it in other aspects of your life, you're still going to die, regardless of how good you are in the gym, eventually. That PR isn't necessarily going to help you in those last days. So, I agree with you that it's really about just being able to utilize those skills and those discipline and confidence that we learn, and being able to really understand how to apply it into other facets so that we become an improved person and not just improved body fat or improved muscle tone or improved at some lift.

MM: Right.

SC: I respect accomplishment in myself. I try to go farther. I try to set PRs and of course that's a good thing. But, I just think that it's not the most important thing. People have to be realistic about the whole...just the whole fitness as an industry and as a hobby. Because, the reason why people can go to gyms and do that is because we have really the more luxury than what we ever had in the past. Well...maybe two years ago.

But, the point is that you're not going back...you're really only going back one generation and people didn't do that because they were working all day. They didn't have the luxuries going for a jog or going to pump iron. So, really got to keep it in context and look at it for what it is. It's really just a luxury. It's not a necessity.

MM: Right. I mean, for those who have traveled overseas, they can attest to that where you go to a place like Kenya or rural parts of India, for example. If you told those

people about the benefits of working out and joining a gym, they would just laugh at you, because, I mean, they spend a couple of hours each morning just walking to where they're going to work, and they're doing very, very physical work all day long. And you don't really see anybody that's obese in those settings. And it's not because their diet is really good, a lot of these people are pretty poor, so the quality of their nutrition is not that great. But, they do spend a lot more time being physically active and being in fresh air than Americans do. So, I think that's a really interesting point about gyms. No doubt.

Also, you brought up a great point about learning fear and doubt at a young age, where we're basically now born with those mechanisms and somewhere along the line it's basically bombarded on us. And I think it's bombarded on us at a young age and all the way throughout life.

If you look at most commercials and most marketing and the way most products are sold, it's basically getting you to doubt yourself in some capacity and then have some fear if you don't acquire the product in question. I think those are very damaging things, because so many people don't improve their life in any facet due to all the doubts and fears they have.



SC: That's of huge important to me. What you're talking about is just as important as the physical strength and conditioning. I completely agree with you. In fact, our own field of fitness and strength and conditioning is filled with this hyperbole and people trying to market their good based on that same type of fear and doubt and basically

telling people they're inferior and they need to buy their product, buy now, otherwise something bad is going to happen to them.

Yeah, I agree, and the media certainly perpetrates that and people's belief systems perpetrate that. It's very difficult to kind of circumvent that viscous cycle. Parents pass it along to their kids and it just requires analysis. But, I really try to not subscribe to that at all. I mean, we all have our fears and insecurities that pop up, but I have three children and I never would tell them... It's not that you don't say no, but you'll see parents sometimes their kids are maybe on the bars and the parents will say, "Don't do that. You're going to fall." And sure enough, the kid probably ends up falling. But, I never do stuff like that with my kids, because people have it ingrained excellence. They have this spirit inside of them and they have to be able to explore that and develop their own skills.

Just because maybe I might have a fear or I can't do something doesn't mean I think that maybe my kids can't do it. So, to me, that's a big part of parenthood, too, is just kind of letting them develop as individuals and not putting your fears and your doubts upon them, because maybe your parents told you you couldn't do something. And so, you grew up your whole life believing that you couldn't. And so, you try to pass these supposed facts upon to the next generation.

There's a real problem with that, with the whole education. And media does a lot to perpetrate that. I don't think media is bad. I think there's new medias that are more positive now, but at least the dominant media still has a very negative overtone, whether it's the nightly news or even the reality shows. Usually we're cheering for people that are a lot worse off than us, or we're cheering for people that are going to fail in some way. I think that it's a real issue that people need to look at as individuals, is trying to eliminate those doubts, and even assess our beliefs and get rid of those beliefs that really don't serve us in a positive way.

MM: Right. I think when you have a lot of fear and doubt, it prevents you from going after what you want and then what happens is when you see others doing maybe what you wanted to do or achieving at a high level in other fields, you have this subconscious... You have this subconscious desire, almost, to see other people fail because of your own inadequacies.

SC: Correct.

MM: So, it becomes this real viscous cycle where you go, well, I'm not going to be successful because of my fears and doubts that were bombarded on me when I was a kid. But, I don't want anyone else to be successful either, because that makes me feel worse about myself.

SC: It's that comfort zone. It's definitely human nature. We want to be around people that are like us, and it enables us to stay within a comfort zone. So, that's why it's very important for leaders to be positive and be very open and be willing to lead by example, and a positive example. Because, then people can see that to be miserable is actually a choice and they don't have to choose that. They can choose to be excellent. They can choose to pursue excellence and they can actually choose to pursue their dreams and create the life that is satisfying and fulfilling. That, to me, is really exciting. And I think we're in a time and an age and there's the technologies at our disposal that more people can start realizing that.

MM: Right. Absolutely. I agree with that. I think also with the whole fear and doubt topic is, when you talk to people who are having a hard time moving forward in their life, whatever the context is, if you probe far enough, often it goes back to something that happened when they were younger. It can be something as simple as their parents just saying, you're not being realistic. That's not going to work out. You need to find a job that's more realistic than that. That experience is very common among a lot of people.

Or, it can be something really traumatic such as being molested as a child or something really severe like that, where you're just bombarded with a high level of stress that you really don't have the capacity to handle at that time. It just manifests in an underlying way throughout your entire life if you don't address it as some point.

So, I think these things go... If you want to be strong and fit, I think you need to address these doubts, otherwise you're not going to be able to even start the path or stay on the path. But even more important than that is just the whole quality of your life is at stake if these things are addressed.

SC: Absolutely. That's the real value of strength and conditioning is to strengthen the whole person, not just the muscles and the character. I think it's a big responsibility because the people that are strong in a society are the people that are most capable of leading and the most capable of developing a great society. And so, I really consider, for me, it's the best possible position, because we can control our own...we can basically control our own destiny. We can make ourselves better. We can improve ourselves. And, we also get to teach others how they can improve themselves.

And so, I really don't respect people that have strong bodies but weak minds or weak characters. Because, to me, it's like a waste. Their strength can only... If they can't use it for good, if they can't use it to be helpful, or at least to be neutral, if they use it only to master over other people or to manipulate, to me, that's really pathetic. I would rather... At least if a person that doesn't have strength has that, they're really not capable of hurting too many people. But, when you have someone with a lot of strength

that doesn't have that self-discipline and that compassion, to me, those people are dangerous because it's like a wild animal. They're a menace to society.

I mean, if they have two good feet, put them in the NFL, and they wreak havoc and we cheer them on. But, to me... I guess the point I'm saying is, to me, I really respect stronger people that have the strong character and they work on themselves and don't just identify everything through their body or what they can do in the gym. That, to me, is the real value of strength training that goes well beyond any physical characteristics.

MM: I think what people don't address, though, is underlying insecurities. What happens is they just go from being a person that was physically weak and unfit to being a person who is now strong and fit, but still has the same exact insecurities. Even with people that are really overweight, this happens where they lose a lot of weight, but the same insecurities they had when they were overweight are still there. And in their mind, they're still manifesting in their life on multiple levels.

SC: Some of the ancient traditions talk about things like the energy body where basically it's an imprint from our emotional state and even though we can change our physical state, if we have a strong connection to that emotional state, it kind of stays with us. And that's why like the example, people that have been fat their whole lives and then they get into a serious weight loss program, a lot of times they look in the mirror and they still see themselves as fat or they still see themselves as unattractive, even though the physical appearance is completely different and they may actually be very lean and very attractive.

So, that's part of it and if you just change your body and you don't have... That's why I emphasize the mind/body training, because it's not just the body. Everything has to grow together and you have to... Even for those of us like you and I and the whole kettlebell concept where you have... Most of these people are looking for more of what you would call the functional type of training or more real life training where you're taking into account all the different planes of motion and the ranges compared to, say, the machine-based training where there's no thinking at all.

Kettlebell training, it puts you on your feet. It makes you think. You've got to use your mind. You've got to pay attention. So, you already have some engagement with that type of training that's a lot more sophisticated than just doing the nautilus circuit where you just punch in the numbers and you're not really having to think. You just go on autopilot.

So, I think that's why that really happens, is when people pursue just the weight loss aspect or the cosmetic aspect, they're really only concerned about burning calories and they're not really thinking about improving their overall life. They're just thinking

about improving their physical appearance. So, a lot of times they miss the other benefits of fitness and conditioning, which is the character and the personality development that goes with it.

MM: Yeah, those are all great points. I think the most rewarding thing when you work with somebody and improve their physical exterior and their fitness level is when they start improving other areas of their life. They realize that, okay, I've taken control of my fitness, what else can I start taking control of? And I've had people emailing me who started businesses that they were scared of doing before, quit jobs they hated to pursue what they really wanted to do. I've even had some people talk about how they were in abusive relationships, but didn't have the strength to get out of it. And once they started getting healthier and getting the toxicity within their body out, now they start wanting to get the toxicity in their life out. And I think those are the ultimate benefits of real fitness and strength and conditioning.

SC: Absolutely.

MM: Well, let's talk about kettlebell training here. You were sort of touching on some of the reasons you got into that. But, what was it about kettlebell training when you first came across it that really appealed to you?

SC: What appealed to me was that it...well, it actually reminded me of Olympic lifting, but without having to have all the equipment or all the space for the Olympic lifting. So, just from the visual descriptions and the picture, I could tell that it was something you were on your feet and you're using your whole body. So, it was really the whole body training that interested me right away.

MM: Right. And what were some of the benefits that you started picking up when you started doing it yourself, just training yourself, with... Let's talk about maybe the first month when you first started training with kettlebells.

SC: I had a lot of experience previous to physical training. So, I had a good idea about what was valuable to me. The thing about the kettlebell training was that it was you can get a lot of work done in a little bit of time, and that was the real appeal. Because, going back to the days when I was training all the time, it was hours and hours and hours and hours. And so, I had tremendous results, but it was a lot of work. It was a lot of time that went into the results. And so, with the kettlebells I was able to simulate a very high level of intensity, but able to do it in much less time.

MM: Right. Now, many people know that both you and I went through the RKC System. I went through it in 2002. I think you went through in 2003. And then, you and I taught at those courses quite a bit and worked together quite a bit as well. But, around 2005, I believe, you made a trip to Russia and either competed in an event or maybe

you sat-in on it, and that was a real pivotal moment in your view of proper kettlebell training and how it should be applied. Can you talk about that a little bit?

SC: Yes, I did compete in the World Kettlebell Championships and if I'd have known better, I would have just sat in and not competed, because the level was so high compared to where I was and anything that I had ever witnessed before.

Basically, the best way to describe it would be like the difference between, say, Pop Warner in NFL, maybe middle school football and NFL, in terms of skill and athletic ability. It really just opened my eyes because I saw guys that most of them were built very lean. They were not...except for maybe some of the super-heavyweights, the majority of the people were very skinny, very lean muscle tone. So, there was no kind of bulk that you would normally associate with strength.

They were putting up just ridiculously high numbers of reps, so far beyond what my level was that it was just a lot of different things that was...the humility of just the embarrassment of feeling like I shouldn't be there. And then, it became the curiosity of wanting to really learn, like how are these guys doing it? It really kind changed my appreciation. It made me think about what I was doing and realizing that at that time I had been a big fish in a small pond. It wasn't acceptable to me. It wasn't sufficient, because I don't believe in the whole fantasies.

For me, it was interested in kettlebell lifting and I was already starting to teach and starting to earn a living teaching kettlebell. So, I felt the real responsibility to have complete knowledge. So, that opened my eyes, realized that I didn't have complete knowledge. And then, since that point, I really pursued getting as much knowledge as I could.

MM: Right. I remember when you came back from that trip and it was a real mind-blowing experience for you, and in opened up kind of a floodgate of passion where you had an irresistible urge just to acquire as much information on how to excel.

SC: It was a real challenge because there really wasn't access to that information. It was only really a few coaches that had really any access to the real Russian systems. Fedorenko was really the only guy that any of us had a relationship with, and he wasn't really teaching in any full-time capacity at that point. So, you might get to see him once or twice a year for a few hour seminar. And every little bit helped, but later, Fedorenko started teaching on a more full-time basis and really was able to understand some of these efficient techniques.

Since then, I've just tried to pick the brains. I have the good fortune of being able to come across a lot of excellent lifters with all the traveling I do in all parts of the world. So, I'm really just always open and picking up new techniques and kind of looking at

things and really just testing it. It really just comes down to testing and you can find out if something really works or if something is going to improve your current level and bring it to a higher level. You integrate the technique and you see how your results come.

So, all of this stuff can really be backed up through performance, and that was really the main difference that I saw in 2005 compared to what I had learned previously, is that it's not about the ad copy or how many books or DVDs you sell. It's really about what you can do. And more than that, what I've come to realize also is it has also to do with the longevity and the ability to communicate these things as well, which is a whole different art and science. To be a good athlete and a good lifter is one thing, and then to actually be able to teach and break these down to different populations, that's an entirely different thing.

So, that's really been my focus and my commitment, is to just be open to any good information that can be worked to test it out, to see how it can be taught to different populations and it works really well. Because, there's no dogma to that. We can very easily, if good information comes that we're lacking, we can very easily integrate that information because we don't have a rigid curriculum.

MM: Yeah, I like the whole notion of personal testing and being open minded, because it's easy to just acquire a certain amount of knowledge and then just maintain that knowledge base for the rest of your life. Sometimes people, for example, have a high level of education, such as a PhD, but then they just shut off learning at that point. I think in our industry it's very common where someone maybe takes one certification or they read a couple of books or they take a higher level course and that's it, in terms of their education. And they're just repeating what they learned and not updating that information or being open-minded or test driving different stuff.

I think the notion of actually test driving it so you experience it yourself if also important, because then it gives you a real understanding of the modality, what the pros and cons are, and whatnot. I think the mistake a lot of trainers make is basically just regurgitating what somebody else told them. They go to a course and somebody says, okay, this is the best way to do it. And instead of thinking about that critically and actually applying some of those concepts and maybe playing around with modifying, they just start teaching what they just heard.

And it's not just our industry; it's a lot of industries. It's the medical industry; it's like that as well, many other industries. I think that's a big mistake where there's no real life experience being applied and also there's no critical thinking being applied. You're just putting your blinders on.

And that kind of brings to the next question where, now the state of the kettlebell community is a lot different than, let's say, when we first got started, about seven or

eight years ago. It's been a while now. Where there was a plethora of information. There's a variety of certifying bodies. There's whole different styles that are being taught. You, more than anyone else in the US, have taught more seminars and certainly trained more people around the world. So, you've been exposed to a lot of different things and a lot of different ideas from people. What do you think about the debate on the proper use of kettlebell training? Do you feel that there's a certain focus that people should gravitate towards or are there multiple uses for a variety of goals? What's your take on that?



SC: Well, I think that people can do whatever they want. It's a form of resistance training. So, if you lift it, if you hoist it in any capacity, you're going to achieve some benefits from resistance. So, of course it would come down to the specificity of goals. However, I do think that kettlebells have a best use. I think that they have a unique use. So, I think for most people, that's a good starting point.

What I mean by that is, because of the shape. I don't believe in wasting time and I think if you have choices... I think if you don't have choices then you have to use what

you have at your disposal. But, if you do have choices, then you want to use the best possible tools.

So, if you're talking about a gym, if you had, say... If you had access to barbells or dumbbells or kettlebells or any other type of tool, then you would choose the one that would be best suited for your goals.

So, with that, I really think the kettlebell design is most suited for the repetition, fast lifts, for the clean and jerk and the snatch. Because, you can do more with a kettlebell than you can do with a dumbbell. And also, because of the shape and the size. Once you get beyond a certain weight, a kettlebell no longer has the right dimensions and it's not going to be really practical to use.

So, you can do whatever you want with a kettlebell, but if you're going to say what is where you're going to get the most bang for your buck using a kettlebell instead of something else, it's going to be more in the work capacity, the strength and conditioning. It's going to come down to the reps. So, I think most people should at least, as a foundation, they should develop that strength endurance component.

If you want to use kettlebells, say, for limit strength training, certainly you can do that. But, that's not going to be for a really advanced athlete. An advanced athlete is going to be able to get to the point where the kettlebells aren't heavy enough.

You have some really super-heavy kettlebells, but those are only for kettlebell fanatics, because they're so expensive. To get a 70-kilo kettlebell, it's going to cost you about \$2,000.

MM: Right.

SC: Yeah. So, you know. Yeah, John "Wild" Buckley has a 71-kilo, but most people aren't going to pick that up. And if they are, who's going to spend \$2,000 when you can buy a barbell for... You can buy a used barbell for \$50, or \$100, and get more weight on it.

MM: Yeah, for \$1,000, you can build the ultimate home gym.

SC: Absolutely. Absolutely. So, of course, you can do whatever you want with kettlebells, but I just don't believe in wasting time. If I was going to try to build my limit strength to the max, then I wouldn't be using kettlebells for most of it; I'd be using barbells.

MM: I think one interesting use of kettlebells, potentially, with, let's say for powerlifters and bodybuilder, for example. Let's say bodybuilders who do a lot of cardio when they want to lean-out. Maybe they could keep doing the weight training program that they

normally do, but instead of doing a lot of work on the treadmill, they do some work capacity stuff with kettlebells, some timed sets with jerks and timed sets with snatches or swings.

SC: Absolutely, with a light weight. I think that's great and it also saves the pounding. It prevents the pounding on the joints, which comes with the running and a lot of that cardio type of training.

MM: Right. I think the structural integrity is one of the most appealing benefits that I see with time sets, whether it's kettlebells or other implements. The whole notion that you can develop your structure where you don't have that breakdown, I think that's really compelling. And I think it could be very useful for powerlifters and bodybuilders as well. For bodybuilders, they're doing a lot of high volume work, and let's say they're doing ten sets of ten on barbell squats. I think what happens is the structure starts breaking down before the actual muscles start breaking down. And then, they have to stop at that point, maybe they can't use as much weight or they have to take longer breaks and not get the same benefits.

But, I think if you develop that structural integrity using kettlebells, and you have that ability to perform at a high level for a longer period of time doing other stuff.

SC: Correct. It is a great cross-conditioning. I think that's... Probably its best benefit, unless somebody's a kettlebell sport athlete where the specific goal is doing as many reps as you can in a set, most people it's going to be cross-training. They're going to use kettlebells to enhance something else or enhance their general fitness. So, there's a lot more variety in what they could do with that.

But, one thing that I try to impress upon people is, at least for me, personally, I don't hold anything against someone if they're looking for basic fitness. But, I believe that, for me, I'm not satisfied with basic. I'm looking for excellence. I'm looking for an exceptional level.

So, what I'm trying to do is I appeal to people that have exceptional expectations for themselves. If they don't have expectations for themselves, if they just want to be average, I certainly respect that and I'm not going to try to prevent that, but it's not really where I'm coming from. Anybody can have average, if you want that.

So, I think something like kettlebells, if it's properly programmed, you can achieve well above average. You can achieve an excellent level. It doesn't mean you're going to be a world-class athlete, but you can have exceptional fitness for an average person.

So, that's really where I'm coming from and if you understand how to program it, you can continue to progress over the course of many, many years, even into senior years. And it does have to do with what you are calling structural integrity, because structural integrity isn't just from strength training, it's also from the posture.

Kettlebell lifting compared to other forms of weight training is more like yoga in that regard, because it's so dependent upon exact alignment and precise alignment in your positioning.

So, you can actually build that structural integrity even with light weight, by doing things many times. Because, you're not going to be able to do it many times unless you learn the perfect form that goes with it. So, that's something that can really be utilized in other aspects of your life and other aspects of using your body.

So, for me, more about the program or the reps or what exercises; it's also the way that you're moving your body with the kettlebells. You're working in all planes of motion. You're working in a very circular fashion and that teaches you to deal with real life forces in a pretty sophisticated way compared to other types of training that I've... it's probably the most like martial art training than any type of weight training because of the momentum. It's very similar in some regards to like a grappling scenario where someone's trying to push and pull on you.

So, the way we move the kettlebells with the swinging, it's really trying to push and pull on our bodies and it does teach us... It really develops the intelligence of the muscles. And I think that that's what some people call the 'what the heck' effect, or that effect where they really don't understand, but they're doing something unrelated and all of a sudden they get these magical powers.

Like, I was...picked up my kid over my head without thinking about it, or whatever it is. And it's because they're learning...their muscles are getting smarter. It's becoming more intelligent and learning how to deal with the forces in that environment. And that's really, I think, why kettlebells are so...people have just become so fanatical about them. It's because it's so different than just moving in a straight line.

MM: Right. I think the improvements in posture, among other benefits, are basically a necessity when somebody's doing a ten-minute set. Because, if you have sloppy technique, you may be able to get through a minute or two, but you're going to break down so fast, you're not going to survive a ten-minute set, even with a relatively light kettlebell if your technique is not relatively precise.

And then, when you look at people that perform at a really high level, Valery comes to mind, where rep 100 looks exactly the same as rep one. And that was the one thing that impressed upon me the most is that how precise every single repetition

was. There was no rep where that technique broke-down during the entire duration of a ten-minute...a long period.

SC: Exactly. There's just one technique. It's one cut. But, you do that one cut 10,000 times over the course of your...or 50,000 times. It's the same. You have one technique, but you do it 100 times. It's complete mind-body harmony. You're not thinking about the future, you're just thinking about that present moment and boom, you have a perfect technique. And then, you go back to that...kind of that recovery and you just do it again.

So, there's that mental discipline and that patients and it makes sense that the best lifters come from a place like Russia, where they have a very different standard of living and very different expectations. It's going to take a while for the average American to be able to tolerate that type of training, because it's painful. There's no obvious rewards. There's no immediate rewards, and that's a part of it, that mental discipline of like willingly suffering and then going back and doing it again.

In the Western world, most people try to avoid suffering at all costs. When you're doing a ten-minute set of kettlebells, you're like inviting suffering into your life.



MM: Right.

SC: And then to get good, you've got to go ahead and do it again tomorrow, and then keep doing it again, everyday.

So, it takes a special type of person to really put in the time to even just get to that point where they start being pretty good, because, the ego will get in the way. You know, you take a big, muscular dude that is used to lifting weights and there's no way he's going to be able to put up big numbers in kettlebells, it doesn't matter how fit, until he learns to relax, until he learns really the perfect form. And it takes a while.

Most people would rather just do five reps and put it down; ten reps and put it down. Well, that's cool, but you can do that with a dumbbell. You don't need a kettlebell to do five reps.

MM: Right. It's an entirely different skill set. I think some of the carryovers I've found, even with stuff I like to do, I like to do some of the heavier kettlebell training in the ten-rep range or sometimes below that.

SC: So do I.

MM: But, I've even found benefit where, because my structural integrity is better, I do a lot of weight-vest walks and I do some other stuff. So, my structural integrity is very good now. But, what I find with the more precise technique that I picked up from you guys and I picked up from Valery and people like Marty, is that I can lift heavier kettlebells at a lower body weight without as much exertion, because I know how to rest in between each rep. Even if it's only six repetitions, I'm able to conserve in between each rep rather than just try to bang it out as fast as possible and stop when lactic acid builds up.

If you're able to slow down, and you can take basically your three-rep max, and once you master it you can take it up to ten repetitions just like that. So, I think the benefits of the structural integrity and the work capacity, I think it can carry over to really any goal somebody has. Those benefits of being able to fire all guns and then conserve immediately after.

SC: Exactly. It's control. It's about self-control and pacing and managing your energy, and that's really all the martial arts are really about that as well, the traditional martial arts. They really don't value just the muscular power and everything, that the martial arts symbolize sort of by the old master who doesn't move when he doesn't have to. But when he does, he's able to accomplish his goal very effortlessly with no waste of energy.

The other guy is jumping around, doing flying kicks, whatever. It takes him a lot of energy to have a small result. The master takes a little bit of energy to have a big result. So, for life in general, that's a good strategy to have. And it comes with experience as well. It comes with wisdom.

So, just running around, jumping and burning all your energy, that's good for kids. It's good for little kids when you have a lot of energy, but as you start getting older, you don't have as much energy. So, you really don't want to waste it.

MM: What comes to mind when you say that is, the difference, basically, between let's say a high level UFC fight versus a tough man contest were a tough man is basically just two guys off the street, slugging it out, versus professional fighters in the UFC; totally different. In the tough man, the two guys just go at it for as long as they can, which is usually a couple of minutes, if even that. And with the UFC, it's very controlled and paced and energy expenditure is taken into account. No one really just goes in there and starts going guns blazing for three rounds, five rounds, it's just not going to happen.

SC: Right. Exactly.

MM: Well, let's open it up to some of those questions, Ryan, that people sent in. I think we have a whole bunch. I think 78 or 80 questions came in.

RM: Yeah, we definitely... I do have quite a few here. Let me get back to the beginning. I've been kind of fishing through them, seeing what are some good ones to take out.

MM: Okay.

RM: All right. I'll go ahead and start off. This one comes from Dwayne. He just started using kettlebells and he wants to continue with deadlifting and squatting using barbells. What would be a good way for him to incorporate the kettlebells in this type of program?

SC: Are you answering this, Mike, or am I?

MM: Oh, it's you. These are all for you.

SC: Okay. I think a good way to do it is to split it, if you're doing a four-day-a-week, would do two days kettlebells, two days powerlift, alternating. So, say Tuesday/Thursday powerlift or Monday/Wednesday, Tuesday/Friday, something like that, and just split them, two days each. So, you have two days as your conditioning, emphasizing the conditioning with the kettlebells, two days emphasizing more of the

strength training with the barbells. And that's a pretty safe way that you can kind of work them together.

MM: Yeah, I think that's a great approach and I think the kettlebell ballistic work, swings in particular, really loosen-up the back and help you recover from those heavy deadlifting sessions.

SC: Great point, Mike. Thank you.

RM: We can kind of just blast through these as fast as we can so we get to the most of them, that way we're not on the call forever, because we have a ton of them.

The next one comes from Scott. He asks, "Where do you think the future of the kettlebell sport lifting is heading and do you think it will become an Olympic sport?"

SC: It's growing. It's growing in every continent. There's more and more interest, so it's going to continue to get bigger. I think it's worthy of being an Olympic sport. It's certainly as tough as many of the Olympic sports out there. The question is going to be the leadership and organization and people willing to play together. If there's factions bickering, then it won't be an Olympic sport. If people can have a big picture and work together for the benefit of the sport, then it certainly deserves to be an Olympic sport.

RM: The next one comes from Michael. He's experiencing tightness in his knees the day following doing jerks. Any suggestions on that? And he also thanks you both for giving yourself to your fans.

SC: Without looking, I would speculate that maybe he's doing something with the dip where maybe his position...maybe he's dipping too much on that first dip and loading the knees too much. He wants to try to remember to try to load the hips more so and less from the knees. But, certainly, it doesn't take the place of a diagnosis if he has some kind of injury. Then, you might have to be willing to do away with jerks for a while, just do presses, let the knees heal. But, when you feel ready to go at it again, try to think about loading the hips and less knees, and seeing if that helps you at all.

RM: The next one comes from Paul. He asks, "Who are some of the people who have inspired you and what do you look for in a good teacher?"

SC: Well, those who inspire me are people that do great things. So, someone like Gandhi who was able to grant liberty to 600-million people. That's a good example of a guy who did a great thing. People like maybe Martin Luther King, Jesus Christ. I'm not really going to have any athletes or fitness people on there.

As far as what I look for in a good teacher, lead from the front. They have to be willing to suffer along with the students, at times, and I think the ability to listen is very

important, and the ability to communicate clearly. It's not just what the teacher's agenda is. It's how they can serve their students. So, those are some of the qualities that I look for.

RM: Paul asks...this kind of goes right along with that question. "What do you consider the most important factors for success in training and then life?"

SC: Consistency. It's not being great every once in a while, it's being good all the time, and trying to just stick with it and work, work, work. So, consistency is huge. The other thing is positive attitude, not thinking about what you do don't want, but staying focused on what you do want. The other thing with that is to have clarity, is to be clear in your mind what it is, exactly, that you want. So, those are things that are necessary to achieve success, whether it's life, training or any form of success.

RM: Tom asks, "What are the best exercises to build bulk?"

SC: The best exercises for building bulk, well, you're probably... He didn't specify kettlebells, and I wouldn't either. You're looking at things like deadlift, squat and heavy pressing. Those are pretty much your old standbys. Anything that can work the back would be...things like heavy rows, one-arm or two-arm rows. So, those are going to be your old standbys.

Certainly, if you have some experience with the clean and jerk and the snatch, using barbells, those are your classic mass-builders. So, deadlift, squat, heavy press, heavy clean and then any type of overhead lifts, snatch, clean and jerk.

RM: Joey asks, "What are your top three favorite combinations for kettlebell complexes?"

SC: I would say one is with two kettlebells, double snatch, overhead squat. Another one is a clean squat, push press. Just clean and jerks by themselves is a great one. So, those are probably my three favorite. The snatch, overhead squat, the clean squat, push press and the clean and jerk.

RM: Rick asks you to please give him two or three of the best kettlebell exercises to combine with his weight lifting and med ball routine, mainly for general fitness, as he's a competitive golfer and tennis player.

SC: I would say one-arm clean and jerk, if not clean and jerk, clean and push press. Kettlebell swing, any variation of swing, one-hand or two-hand, and any type of double overhead lift, be it... So, clean and jerk, swing and snatch or...that's pretty much it. Swing, clean and jerk, snatch. You can't really get better than that.

RM: That pretty much hits everything right there.

SC: Yeah.

RM: Mike asks, “Steve, what does your personal workout consist of, particularly the break-down between kettlebells, body weight and traditional weight training?”

SC: Most of my personal training is kettlebells and chi gong. For the kettlebells I’m doing...I’m usually doing one of the core lifts, either one-arm snatch, two kettlebell jerk or two kettlebell clean and jerk. And then, I’ll always do some form of squat: front squat overhead squat, front squat with two kettlebells, overhead squat with one kettlebell, or pistols, weighted pistols.

So, I’ll do one of the core lifts. I’ll do something for legs and then maybe a little running in the evening, maybe 30-40 minutes, just kind of an easy run. And then, the other thing would just be the deep breathing and the chi gong and some of the basic Chinese martial art movements, just for mobility and fluidity. So, my training is very, very simple.



RM: Do you train every day?

SC: I train every day if I'm not on an airplane or if I'm not just getting off an airplane. So, I try to train every day, for sure.

RM: Does that include jumping on picnic tables? I had to add that in there.

SC: I don't consider that training. I would just consider that just play, really.

RM: Awesome. The next one is from Sincere. He asks, "What's an optimal way to add restorative activities in, such as qigong, tai chi and/or yoga to a kettlebell training program?" Say he's training kettlebells four days a week.

SC: One excellent way is to do simple chi kung between work sets to lower the heart rate. And then, an idea program would maybe be starting with something like a tai chi that's sort of a gentle mobility movement to warm-up the joints to harmonize the breathing and to get the mind very focused. And then, you're doing your kettlebell training in the very vigorous sets, when you're really kind of wasted. Instead is just laying on the ground or sitting down, try to do some chi kung to actively slow the heart rate, slow the breathing.

And then, at the very end of training, five or ten minutes of something like a standing meditation or again, a very gentle chi kung as a way to just kind of circulate and just relax the system. So, you can do before, in between hard sets, and then at the very end, as a restorative.

RM: Paul asks, "What kettlebell exercises can he do for cardio fat burning on a consistent basis that won't affect his recuperation time from his regular lifting routine?" He doesn't want to over-train.

SC: Okay. So, if his regular lifting, I'm assuming he's talking about maybe bodybuilding program or powerlifting program. If kettlebells is a supplement, it makes sense just to use more of a lighter weight and you're doing it for cardio. So, you'd want to do... You can do like 20-minute circuits where you don't put the kettlebell down for 20 minutes. One minute each exercise.

So, for example, swings, clean, you do just with one kettlebell. You do one-arm swing. Clean, press, jerk, snatch, overhead squat, front squat, windmill, basic movements, one minute each hand. And then, if you need an active rest between exercises, you can do an around-the-body pass.

And then, just work for say 20 minutes nonstop. That's a great way to get a very effective cardio workout using a light to moderate weight. So, you're not really straining

too much, and that's certainly not going to detract from his other heavier weight training that he's doing.

RM: All right. Joseph asks, "What is the best way to train pistols with or without weights?"

SC: Well, the first thing is to learn the body position. It's a skill. So, before you start going too heavy, you want to really make sure that you can do it with your body weight. If you're having trouble sitting back, then using a box is a really good way.

Mike Mahler actually did an article on what he calls a 'stair step approach', which is very good, where you do them in front of the stairs. You start on maybe the third stair and then you graduate to the second, to the first. So, you move down a step as you get better, and gradually increase the range of motion. That's a really good way to go, is using a box or a series of boxes to sit back and down. That's really what you need to learn. You need to learn to sit back and down.

Once you can do, say, five pistols with just your body weight, then you can start gradually loading, say, with kettlebells and adding a little bit of weight to it. But, I really believe in perfecting the form before you start loading.

RM: David asks, "It seems everybody recommends get-ups. What is it about the get-up that makes it so special, and what does it actually do for you?"

SC: I don't know how special it is. I think that a lot of people promote it because they're trying to sell DVDs. I think it's a good exercise and there's other good exercises. Probably the main thing that makes it seem special is that it's different and most people have never seen it. So, it looks really cool. As an exercise, it is a whole body exercise. It ties-in the shoulder girdle with sort of your abdominal and core musculature. It requires a degree of coordination and a degree of agility. But, I certainly wouldn't put it as one of my top five exercises. I think it's... I won't go so far as to say it's a gimmick, but I think it's very specialized and I think it's probably over-used in and over-promoted.

MM: Yeah, just to add onto that, I think it's a good exercise, but I think if you spend time focusing on other stuff such as developing good overhead strength via presses, push presses, jerks, and then you have good squatting strength, you can go into the Turkish get-up and do really well without ever really practicing it. But, not vice versa.

So, in other words, a Turkish get-up is not going to improve your jerk strength or your push press strength or your military press strength. It may, marginally, if you have some kind of shoulder instability issue. But, that's going to be addressed from doing the overhead work.

So, I think the Turkish get-up is a good exercise, but it's one of those exercises that I wouldn't put as a necessity either. I agree with Steve completely on that.

RM: Daniel asks, he has quit training with barbells because he has neck and shoulder problems and training with barbells seems to aggravate these issues. So, he's substituting his strength training with calisthenics, resistance band work, a TRX suspension trainer, clubbells and kettlebells. His question is, "Is it possible to get all the fitness benefits from strength training without using barbells and dumbbells?"

SC: Yes, you can get all of the benefits just using your body weight. It really has more to do about principles of movement than any particular implement that you might be using. Depending on what his goals are, if he's looking for general fitness, then he's got plenty of tools that he's using now that he can achieve exceptional general fitness. So, I don't think he has a problem not using barbells.

RM: Sven asks, "What is the best way to use kettlebells to achieve a better vertical jump?"

SC: Well, that's a very good question. I'm leery of saying that something is going to be the best. There's many different ways. But, you can't go wrong with doing squats. You can't do wrong with strengthening your posterior chain. So, with kettlebells you're talking about swings, you're talking about snatches. Those two in particular, you are probably going to want to do some very fast twitch type of movements. So things like heavy...this would be an appropriate use for heavier kettlebells, lower reps, sets of three to five with a heavy, in things like double snatch, double clean, double clean and jerk, as well as single kettlebell lifts, the swing and the snatch. All of those are going to do a lot to strengthen the butt, strengthen the hamstrings, strengthen the back. So, if you get those muscles stronger, you will jump higher.

RM: Jim asks, if he's purchasing kettlebells for the first time, does it matter if he purchases two, or will one do for the time being? He needs to eliminate fat and build-up muscle and what would be the idea size to get for an average 6'2" and 260?

SC: Wow. He's a pretty big guy, probably, I would think... He doesn't really say what his conditioning is, but if his conditioning is not great, probably a 20-kilo would work very well. I think it's a good idea to work a lot unilateral. So, he doesn't necessarily need to kettlebells right away.

I can't really answer this not knowing what the person's capabilities are. So, it's a very general question. But, I would say that it would benefit him to start with one kettlebell, at least for the first month. If he can afford to get two, by all means, get two, because you're going to use it soon.

A pretty big guy, 260, 20 won't be super-heavy, but it's heavy enough that he can really do a lot of cardio, a lot of repetition. Even a 16-kilogram would not be bad. So, I would start with like a 16 or a 20-kilogram and then build up from there.

RM: Next one is, Kay asks, "Steve, thank you for your excellent work." She purchased your 'Extreme Kettlebell Workout' DVD, but is at a loss when it comes to arranging a workout regime. "How do you organize all these wonderful workouts in terms of days and routines?"

SC: Okay, well, that question's a little bit confusing, because the 'Extreme Kettlebell Workout' is workout programs. So, the goal of that is that you actually follow the workout on the DVD.

But, in general, how you organize...a real simple way of doing it is you select one push, one pull and one squat. Let's say if you're training four days a week, you have two days, one day of rest, two days, and then you get another one day of rest.

So, I would take a push, a pull and a squat in every workout, and then depending on your fitness level, you would start with maybe sets of ten and build up, maybe to a total of 100 reps. So, for example, you can do a swing, a press and a front squat. That's how I like to keep it very simple. You don't necessarily need to do 10 or 20 different exercises. If you do a pulling movement, that works all the pulling muscles. Pressing movement, that works all the pressing muscles. Throw in the legs. The kettlebell, you're working your cardio, you're working your grip. So, just something with three lifts is going to really work your whole body.

And then, you just change it each time. So, you can do snatch one day, swing the other; press one day, jerk the other; front squat one day, overhead squat the other. So, you're getting the same general movement patterns, but you have variety built into it.

RM: This question is actually from Jason, but this has got patterns that there's a lot of questions regarding it. He feels like he's stuck between a 24-kilogram and a 32-kilogram in his presses. What is the best way to make that transition?

SC: It's called the 28-kilogram, actually. It's a really good way of making that transition. So, that would be the actual answer. If he's not willing to get a 28-kilogram, they are available, then the next thing would be to change the configuration of the 24 to make it heavier. So, if he can do cleans with the 24, and presses, but he can't press the 32, see if he can do bottoms-up cleans with the 24 and bottoms-up presses. So, the weight is the same, but you're making the leverage more difficult. So, that's going to enable you to recruit more muscles and develop your strength that way. But, optimally, if he can get a 28-kilo, that will help him bridge the gap.

Some people tape lightweight plates with duct tape to the bottom of their kettlebells. You can do that, but it's a bit of a hassle. You may not want to go through that, but that's an option if you don't want to buy a heavier kettlebell. You can put a 2.5-lb plate and duct tape it to the bottom of your 24-kilo and now you have a slightly heavier bell...for pressing...not so good for snatches.

RM: Next one is from Frank. "Steve, I see you've written a great testimonial on John Brookfield's website. How much of an influence has John been on your training and do you currently use his 'Battling Ropes System' in your training?"

SC: John has influenced me in terms of his work ethic and his humility. He's a very...extremely strong guy and he's a very gentle guy and very humble. So, I really respect that. I don't really train similar to the way John trains. I don't use his 'Battling Ropes'. I was exposed to it and I think it's really great, but it's not something that I currently incorporate in my training. But, I do think it's excellent training.

RM: Joe asks, "What suggestions or resources would you point to for someone to build a good year-around training cycle/program?"

SC: You know, Mike Mahler's excellent. He's got really, really great results. He's got...a lot of people swear by his program. So, I can definitely very highly recommend Mike Mahler, if he is actually taking clients right now. But, that's someone I would definitely go to right away for programs. Ken Blackburn, my associate, also, is very good at putting together those types of programs.

RM: The next one is from Ryan. He asks, he's at a gym with lots of free-weights, dumbbells, bars and everything else under the sun, but no kettlebells. What exercises are good proxies for kettlebell work, but only free-weights at hand?

SC: I would say save his money, quit the gym, take the gym membership, save up and buy a kettlebell, train at home. To answer his question, presses, one arm jerks, presses, swings. Those are going to be the main ones. But, really, none of the exercises are going to give you the same feel, just because you're dealing...a dumbbell is a different design. So, you're not going to get the same grip, you're not going to get the same alignment.

You can simulate the movements and get benefit. Surely you can get benefit from doing variations of swings, doing snatches, doing presses. But, really, optimally, you should just maybe try to get a kettlebell and train at home.

RM: The next one is Robert. "There seem to be some people using kettlebells as more of an interval cardio-type workout with little or no rest days, and other seem to be the heavier kettlebells and a more traditional muscle-building approach. What would

you recommend to the guy who's about 40-pounds overweight and should he worry about lifting with kettlebells without a rest day?

SC: It doesn't say his age, so the rest day will depend on your recovery. But, if you're going to lift every day, then you're not going to be able to go high intensity every day. And if you're going to go high intensity, then you can't lift every day. So, it really depends on that factor.

Probably for most people, five days a week is pretty good. Six days a week is good. But, I don't think... You probably should give yourself at least one day off a week.

As far as the way...you stated 40 pounds overweight. So, the goal really should be volume and sweating. So, you're going to want to deal more with a light to moderate weight and do high repetitions, high volumes, anyway you can get it. Interval training is a great way to do it. Ten sets of ten, for example. Try to build the total volume with the basic lifts and use the large muscles of your body, the squats, the swings, the snatches, the presses, the cleans. Use light weight so you can put a lot of volume, let your body adapt, not injure yourself. Once you get conditioned, then you can start moving up with heavier weights and continue to increase the volume. The goal would be to do more work in the same amount of time, or the same amount of work in less time, as you progress.

RM: Janice asks, "Do you believe kettlebell training is appropriate for all age groups? And if so, what adjustments would you make in training someone who's over 50, 60, 70, et cetera?"

SC: I think that some assessment is in order, first of all. You won't say as a general statement that everyone should do kettlebells. I will say if someone can get in and out of a chair, then they have the requisite skills to begin their kettlebell training, because if you can sit in a chair and stand up, that's the same movement that you would do in the first kettlebell lift, which is the swing.

I think for most people, if they have basic function and they're able to walk and they're able to do basic movements, then they can incorporate kettlebells very conservatively with a light kettlebell, not doing too heavy or too much volume too soon.

If a person has physical limitations that they can't do just basic movement skills like squatting into a chair, maybe holding their body up in a plank position, then you really need to look at that and do some range of motion therapy before you start with the kettlebell lifting.

As far as modifications, it really just comes down to realizing that as people age, their recovery isn't as fast and they're going to have more range of motion limitations. So, you have to be very conservative with the progressions of the weight. It's always better to error on the side of caution. If you're unsure, go with the lighter weight. If you're unsure, do less reps, because you can always come back and do more the next time. But, if you do too much at the beginning and cause injury, elderly people are not going to recovery as fast and you can cause some problems for them.

So, as long as you're careful and don't try to do too much too soon, then really you should just go for it.

RM: Paul asks, "How can you work towards getting both elbows to rest on the hips AKC-style in the rack position?"

SC: Get longer arms. I guess the question I would ask as a coach is, is he built like Fedorenko? And if he's built like Fedorenko, then there's no better person to emulate than Fedorenko. If he's not built like Fedorenko, then he may want to try to determine a model that has a body type more similar.

Is it possible that everyone can rest their elbows on their hips? I don't believe so. I think that a lot of people can, but I think there's some people that their physiology is not going to allow it. And if you try to emulate that, you're just fighting against your physiology.

So, even though I respect Fedorenko as a great lifter, I don't believe that one-size-fits-all. I don't believe that there's a one true way, and I think that when it comes to the rack position, most of the work is in finding a position that does enable someone to rest.

But, for sure, optimal is to get those elbows down. So, you have to look at your limb length and you've got to look at if you're carrying a lot of tension in your traps. Maybe some relaxation drills and some stretches to pull your shoulders down. If you have a lot of tension in your upper back and traps, then by releasing that you may be able to get your elbows down. But, you really have to look at your physiology and see if it's even practical. And if it's not, then you need to adapt a different type of resting position. Maybe use more of the spinal muscles versus... Maybe develop more back flexibility and have a little bit more of a backward arch as a way to find a rest that way.

RM: Lynn asks, "What is a great, no-kidding program for a woman that wants to get lean?" She has all your videos and owns eight kettlebells, anything from 10 to 45 pounds and loves them all. "I love the exercises, but want to be leaner and have better definition." She weighs 110 at 5'1" and 17% body fat. "How many times a week and for how long should I be using them?"

SC: She should probably try to train at least 30 minutes, maybe an hour and probably, ideally, I think, six days a week is good if her schedule allows. I think that the main thing is to build the volume. And the best way to build the volume is to do some every day versus trying to kill yourself two or three days a week.

That's the best case scenario, if you can train five or six days a week. Build your volume and really stick with the core lifts, as I've said to almost every answer. You want to deal with the swings, you want to deal with the cleans, the presses, the jerks.

For your money, things like clean and jerk, you're not going to be able to burn more calories with any other single lift than the clean and jerk, because you're just working the system so intensely.

So, those are the type of lifts that are going to burn the most calories. Burning calories is what's going to get you lean. So, it's always going to come back to that volume if you're looking to get leaner. You need to burn a lot of calories and the way you do that is by doing reps, doing more reps.

MM: Let's just add to that real quick. I mean, if you want to get really lean, the diet has to be addressed and you want to make sure you're getting some really deep, quality sleep, because that's when you produce a lot of growth hormone, which burns fat and helps you get leaner and build more muscle. So, don't be fearful of building muscle, because muscle doesn't have to be bulk. You can have really dense muscle where you're not taking up more space on the planet, you're just leaner and will have the ability to stay leaner.

SC: Great points, Mike.

RM: Last one is from Joel, "Do you ever incorporate power bands from Elite FTS with kettlebells? And if so, what are some of your favorite things to do with them?"

SC: I've played around with doing that, like wrapping them and doing swings. But, it's not something I do as training. No.

There's certainly benefits from it. I think it would have more benefit, say, for a powerlifter or someone that's trying to work certain ranges to lock-out a heavy load. The bands provide that accommodating resistance that helps to train you to maybe move faster through certain portions of the lift.

But, I don't find that that's particularly beneficial to my goals, that type of training. And I don't like to do things just to do things. I like to have a reason for doing it.

So, I'm familiar with the type of training. I've seen it. I think it certainly can give a good training, but I think there's a lot just to be studied within the basic kettlebell lifts without trying to doctor them up with other things, at least for what my goals are.

RM: And like you said, Mike and Steve, I'll go ahead and send you guys a copy of all these questions, too, so you can have them. But, a lot of them are kind of the same things over and over.

MM: Great. I'll just ask Steve a few more questions and then we'll wrap this up. I don't want to take-up his whole evening. One question that comes to mind is, there's so many certifying bodies now for kettlebell certification, what do you feel makes the IKFF different than... Well, actually, I'll make it a two-part question. One, what inspired you to start the IKFF, and two, what do you feel makes it different than some of the other organizations out there?

SC: The reason I started it was because I saw that there was fundamentally a lack of support for the members in existing kettlebell organizations. I felt that I wanted to create something that the message and the organization and the body of knowledge is bigger and more lasting than just the person at the head of it. I didn't want it to just be about Steve Cotter, but I wanted it to be about all the good people that get involved and have something that they could leverage to improve their own education and their own lives.

So, it was really designed to be a member-base rather than just a personality-based company. And there was a real need for that. So, that was really the reason I started, that coupled with the fact that I was getting emails all the time saying, "I really love your stuff. Are you ever going to do your own certification?" So finally I decided to acquiesce to the demand in that regard.

As far as what makes IKFF different, first of all, I have a broad vision and I saw that I was the first person to really bring out kettlebells internationally to fitness professionals on every continent. Before that, certainly in Russia, there's a very high level and a high tradition, but there was really not people in Eastern Europe that were really marketing kettlebells. Most of the kettlebells were primarily in the US and in a few western countries like the UK. I saw it as something that would really be beneficial on a global scale.

So, that was one of the things that really differentiated what we're doing with the IKFF. The other things is I think it's not really just about the kettlebells. It's about the comprehensive movement and the holistic approach to health and fitness and wellness versus just trying to sell kettlebells or kettlebell programs.

And the other thing is that I'm not a guru. I'm accessible and I care just as much about the individual as maybe they care about what I have to say. So, basically, I'm

going to speak from the heart when I teach and I'm not trying to just make a sale. I'm really genuinely interested in teaching.

And the last difference is that IKFF is about developing leaders, not followers. So, there's no hierarchy. There's no senior or junior ranking. Everybody has the same capability of achieving their highest level, and that's really up to the initiative of the individual. We teach from the heart and we have no insecurity about people coming that can get to our level or even grow beyond our level. So, that's really what IKFF is about, and that's how we differentiate, is we're really about just opening exchange of information and just improving the whole quality of everyone that comes through, the quality of their life and the excellence of how they teach and how they provide their service to other people.

MM: Yeah, you guys do a great job. I had a chance to stop by one of your courses in Las Vegas last year, and you and Ken Blackburn and Jason Dolby were putting on a certification and you guys were doing a great job. And a couple of things that stuck out as an observer were one, it was a very organized course with good progressions. And two, you could tell that the members, the participants, attendees, were really having a good time. They were really enjoying the experience. They're making friends with one another, and you guys were immediately accessible to any questions people had, as they popped up. So, you could just tell that people felt that were in a very warm and secure environment where they're not going to feel dumb for asking questions and that they're not going to feel inferior if their fitness level is not as high as maybe some of the other people in the room.

So, I think you guys do a great job. And the accessibility, I think, is really important. You don't want to drop a lot of money and spend the weekend or three days and not have a chance to interact with the people that you want to learn from.

SC: Correct. Well, thank you. Thank you for that. That's really important to make people feel like they're a part of it and make them feel important, because they are. We all mean something. So, I'm glad that that comes across in the courses.

MM: Very much so. And I think you can also look into an organization's power by what kind of people are attracted to it, and the fact that you have such an all-star lineup of really good instructors that, like you, really care about their client's results. I mean, when I talk to people like Ken and Jason, for example, their enthusiasm comes through very naturally, how much they enjoy helping other people out and doing their own workouts and just bringing out the best in themselves and wanting to continue to evolve and helping others do the same.

So, I think not only have you created a good environment that has some real benefits over other courses, but also the way you've attracted the people you have is basically the best testimonial that you're doing the right things.

SC: Thank you very much. I'm really lucky to have such high quality people taking interest in our program.

MM: Yeah. And then I'll end by talking a little bit about the course that we're doing together in Los Angeles next month, and just why I came up with the idea and the lineup. Part of it came from watching you guys actually in Los Vegas. I was really impressed with the way you guys work and I'm really impressed with Jason who's come out to many of the big courses that I've put on and just his evolution and his involvement on constantly wanting to get more knowledge. And Ken is definitely the same kind of guy.

And what I saw was just so much confusion about how to use kettlebells and what the benefits are. So, I wanted to have those kind of things addressed at a course where people walk out feeling very confident about the best way to use kettlebells and also the best approach to take for their own goals. And then, just to add a much more comprehensive picture of health where we're going to cover a lot of other stuff. Such as, I'm going to do a couple of lectures on hormone optimization where I basically spend this year in sabbatical mode where I'm just studying that field and now I basically have to narrow down a lot of the stuff I've picked up to a couple of lectures at the course. But, it's going to be a lot of bang-for-your-buck where you're picking up some really good information that increases not only your training abilities and results, but the quality of your life and your world outlook and whatnot.

And also, all of the other instructors are doing a variety of different things. Jason Dolby is going to be doing a section on Indian club training to further joint mobility. Ken Blackburn is going to do a great section on agility training and the importance of that. And also, we have Andrew Durnait who's one of the instructors with the AKC. He's just an all-around excellent strength coach, very impressive athlete who's going to be talking about how to use kettlebells to improve different goals such as Strongman training and different sports. He has a long history of being a high level athlete. So, he's going to have some very good information.

And also, Steve is going to be doing a section on body weight exercises, animal-based body weight exercises. Steven, can you just go over a couple of the benefits of those exercises and why people should implement them into their routines?

SC: Yes. Basically, the animal based training, it's much more comprehensive than standard calisthenics. It's incorporating...literally it's incorporating mind-body-spirit, if you will. It sounds cliché, but the ancient martial artists and the Chinese natural...the

Dowists, they were naturalists and they observed the animals and they observed the quality of the movements and how when they hunted, they would use their body like a coiled spring and be able to load the spring and unload the spring.

And so, there's these types of movements that I'm going to be presenting. I'm teaching you how to use your whole body as one unit, like the way an animal hunts. It's tremendous for just overall body conditioning, because it's incorporating not only the strength component, but it's also incorporating the flexibility and the body control, the coordination.

So, these are types of movements that most people have never seen or attempted to do. But, it's a great sense of accomplishment when you start moving this way, because you really tap into that...sort of that animal quality. And, to me, that's a really important facet of training, because even though we're human beings and we have the intellect, we also have the physicality, just like the animals, in that we have that wild aspect. And aspects of training really need to address that, learning how to really just move your whole body as a unit and having that real powerful feeling.

So, this is going to be a really intensive learning section because it's going to take people that many of them are going to be very conditioned and very strong and very coordinated, but it's going to ask them to do things with their body that they've never done before. So, it's going to be a real opportunity to learn just a whole new way of moving and a whole way of coordinating the muscles and the joints together.

MM: Yeah, that sounds great. I'm really looking forward to not only teaching at the course myself, but learning from all of you guys. I think it's going to be a great learning experience for everybody involved. I like the fact that we're going to be having kettlebells as kind of the centerpiece of the course. But, we're going to go way beyond that into other facets of health and fitness, but it all comes back to improving whatever you want to do.

So, even someone who just trains with kettlebells and that's their focus, it's still a great course for them to come out to because they get the maximal benefits on how to take their kettlebell game to the next level, but also learn a variety of other tools that can improve whatever their goals are. So, I'm really looking forward to that course. And that fact that we're filming it and making a DVD set, it just brings that potential retention up to 100%.

I think people are often...have trepidation about attending a course like this because they just think they're going to be overwhelmed with information. And they're definitely going to be overwhelmed with information because it's going to be three fluff-free days of just a lot of good material being disseminated. But, within a month or two of attending the course, you're going to get a DVD in the mail, which is basically the

course you attended...which is, not basically, is literally the course you attended. So, not only is it the ultimate souvenir, but now you have the potential to take that retention up to 100%.

And I think, on the flip side, some people feel, oh, well I'll just wait for the video to come out. I don't really need to be there live. And that's not really the best approach to take either, because videos are great as a reinforcement tool, but they don't take the place of real-world instruction. I mean, if you want to be an elite martial artist, you're not just going to watch a couple of videos at home and try to figure it out. You really need to have experts in front of you.



SC: You have to be around the energy. You have to be able to take in the whole experience to maximize it. So, the information is good by itself, but to be in that environment, it's really what you would call immersion, and it's the best way to learn, when you immerse yourself in that environment. And that's really what the purpose of this is for, is to just expose them to a really rich level of experience, collectively, with all the instructors that we have. It will be overwhelming at first, but then as they relax and just have fun with it, it's really going to leave a strong impression on them and help them be better teachers. That's really what it comes down to.

MM: I think that's a great point, the fact that people should have a good time and be in a relaxed atmosphere where we're not putting on a paramilitary experience where it's going to be a boot camp for three days. It's going to be intense, but not in a way where we're on a pedestal, teaching in a condescending manner. It's going to be where all of us are very approachable and also you're in a very comfortable environment where, yes, you're working hard, but you don't feel isolated or you don't feel uncomfortable. It's going to be something where you can interact with other people and make some good friends, get a chance to interact with us, ask all your questions and have a good time. We have some social events implemented in, so people have a chance to not only interact with us, but again, make some friends and interact with some other great people that are going to be at the course.

I think it's an overall experience where everyone always gets stronger at these events than when they are on their own, which just shows you the power of being around similar minded people that want to better themselves. I mean, working out on your own, we all have to do it, that's fine. But, when you're around other people that have similar goals in the sense that they want to improve themselves on multiple levels, that group energy is not only contagious, but it's actually powerful where you're actually going to feel stronger and more fit.

SC: Absolutely, because they're going to be seeing us do crazy things and people are going to want to try it, and they're going to surprise themselves.

MM: Right. Exactly. So, it's one of these experiences where it can just super-charge your own training where maybe you're not as excited about your workouts as you have been in a while and you just need something to inject into that. You come to a course like this, you're going to be ready to go once you get home, and you're going to have a video to help reinforce the experience as well.

And I think all of us need inspiration. I think it's a mistake for anyone to feel that they've reached a certain level where they can just do everything on their own, kind of this isolationist, individualist... You need to be a strong individual, but you're only going to have so much growth by yourself, on your own. I think when you have a combination of being prepared to do a lot of work on your own, but also taking time to attend events like these where you get a lot of good information and you get to interact with a lot of other people, it really does provide a lot of inspiration and energy that you take when you go home.

SC: Absolutely. For me as well.

MM: Well, great, Steve. Thanks a lot for doing the call. Appreciate it. And just to plug you sites real quick, for more information on Steve's certification course, which I highly recommend, go to www.IKFF.net, and he is all over the country and overseas. So, if

you're overseas, don't feel that attending a certification is not an option for you, because changes are Steve is on his way to where you are or has already been there. So, definitely take a look on his website, sign up for his newsletter so you can keep updates with when he's going to be around. He has a whole team of great instructors that are also teaching certifications all over the place. So, definitely check that out.

And also, FullKontakt.com, to check out some great videos and some books. Steve's got a really high quality line of products, really excellent stuff. So, definitely check that stuff out.

And also, make sure that you get to my website to learn more about the course that we're teaching next month. It's just www.MikeMahler.com. We still have some spots left. And also, many people have asked me if there's a two-day option. Some people can't get Friday off. We're actually doing a three-day course, Friday-Saturday-Sunday, where some people have asked if there's an option to just attend on Saturday and Sunday. And we're going to make that option available to you, for some people who maybe for job-related reasons, they just can't get the days off. They can't get away. We know we're in a tough economy right now, where maybe taking that many days off is just not going to work for a lot of people. So, shoot me an email about that option if that's amenable to you, to what you want to do.

And other than that, Ryan, thanks a lot for hosting another great call. And your website, MuscleGainingExperts.com is definitely something people should go check out, and sign up for you newsletter. You're putting a lot of really good free information out there. I mean, there's a lot of information on the web that's free, but it's just not that great. And calls like this are really high quality, really good information. They're not costing anybody anything. So, I mean, it's a no-brainer to sign up for your newsletter and take advantage of all the great stuff that you're generously putting out there.

RM: Yeah, I appreciate that plug. I think this is like my 9th teleseminar so far, and I've got a lot more planning in the works to get out there. So, for the people on the call, if you're on the call, you're already on that list. So, you don't have to go sign up again unless you want to get double emails from me.

SC: Thank you so much, Mike and Ryan. I really appreciate it, guys.

RM: No problem, Steve.

MM: All right, thanks guys. Take care.

RM: Thanks a lot guys. Talk to you later.

SC: Okay, take care. Bye.

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