



WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Mike Mahler and Ken Blackburn

RM: Hi guys, once again I want to thank you guys for being on the call. My name is actually Ryan Magin. I'll be hosting the call for you guys tonight. We're on the line right now with Ken Blackburn and Mike Mahler.

If you don't already know, Ken is the Director of Operations for the International Kettlebell and Fitness, IKFF. He teaches kettlebell certification courses all of the world with Steve Cotter. If you want to learn more about this, you can go to IKFF.net.

Ken will be one of the instructors at the Kettlebell Training Age of Quarrel Workshop this fall in Los Angeles that him and Mike are putting on. He's also one of the top American kettlebell competitors and currently holds the American record in the jerk and is the 2007 World Champion in the chair press. That's a mouthful there, Ken.

Mike is a strength trainer, his information provided, he has been a kettlebell instructor since 2002 and pretty much paved the way for all things kettlebell in the

States, it seems. His current focus is in the field of natural hormone optimization. He's also work on a book title, [Live Life Aggressively, What the Self Help Gurus Don't Want You to Know](#). For more information, you can sign-up for his free strength magazine at [MikeMahler.com](#).

I'll let you guys take it away.

MM: Well, thanks a lot, Ryan, and what's your website again? You said it to me, but I'm not online right now. You have a great website as well that I want to make sure everyone knows about.

RM: I have two, actually one that I'm promoting right now. [CriticalBench.com](#) and I basically take it upon myself to try to interview everybody. Anybody that has anything to do in the strength and conditioning and muscle building industry that gets things done and has a good style of training, I have pretty much tried to interview and have interviews scheduled. I've done about ten the last month.

MM: Oh, great. You're doing a great job, Ryan, and we're definitely going to give that a plug on my website and make sure more people are aware of what you're doing.

RM: Awesome, man, I appreciate that. Thank you very much, Mike.

MM: Well, thanks a lot. Yeah, well, today's call is going to be Ken and I basically talking about kettlebell training and it's going to be me more asking questions to Ken and leveraging his expertise to learn more about the many benefits of kettlebell training.

One of the things about kettlebell training right now is there's a lot of confusion because there's kind of a mass flow of information that's propagated over the last several years. So, when I got started in 2002, there was basically only one certifying organization from Dragon Door, taught by Pavel Tsatsouline. And what's happened now is, the kettlebell community has evolved dramatically, to the point where there's more people involved from different backgrounds. We have more people from Russia that competed in the sport at a very high level and they're disseminating a lot of that information.

So, what's happening is, people are either becoming very polarized where they're just picking one style and they're adamant that that's the best option for every single goal possible. Or, they're picking another style and you've got a lot of these kind of asinine battles going back and forth between people on what's the best way to go. And what I want to do with the course that I'm doing in the fall, Kettlebell Training in the Age of Quarrel is to put together a really good lineup, which we definitely have, and then just cut through a lot of that confusion and just show the variety of applications of

kettlebell training. And then, just show people what they can do for their individual goals rather than saying this is the only way to go, no matter what your goals are.

One of the guys who I think is one of the most innovative instructors out there is by far Ken Blackburn. In addition to being extremely knowledgeable, he's an impressive athlete. He's produced some incredible results for other people, and he's just a very open-minded trainer and he gets a lot of inspiration from some really odd places. Like, for example, he came up with a form of power-breathing after watching the movie, Good Luck Chuck. So, hopefully we'll get to some of that later.

He has this really innovative style of joint mobility/agility training, which he picked up after watching Jean-Claude Van Damme's infamous dance in the movie Kickboxer. So, we might get a chance to talk about that as well.

But, Ken, let's get started with your athletic background. How did you get into strength and conditioning?

KB: Well, to kind of start, I mean, I have always been in martial arts pretty much since I was a kid, and connected to that. I was always looking for different ways to improve my conditioning that were kind of outside the norm. And I think when we all started, all that was really available, you know, we'd get the Muscle & Fitness, we would see the bodybuilder programs, things like that. And so, I was looking for something beyond that. And I actually stumbled on a book at Borders and saw kettlebells and then saw a picture of Steve Cotter. And strangely enough, I was at my Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu club the next day and I saw a flier with Steve's name on it, I attended the workshop the next day and I was hooked. I think it's just an awesome tool and it has a lot of different benefits, and there's a lot of different ways to use it.

MM: What were some of the things that kind of jumped out on you when you first had a chance to train with kettlebells? What did you find in particular that really appealed to you?

KB: I think number one is that the days of going into the gym and having to spend three hours doing numerous isolation movements for different muscles. So, I really liked the idea of training the body as a unit. And with that, you get a better bang for your buck in terms of your time investment.

So, although there's always going to be time in the gym, there's no such thing as a free lunch. But, the time that I do spend in the gym now is less, my intensity is higher and the movements of the kettlebells, they're athletic in nature, they involve a lot of different muscle groups. They tend to simulate, to a large degree, what we see in athletics as well.

MM: Right, so more full body motions and more learning how to teach the body how to work as one unit rather than just one muscle at a time?

KB: Oh, absolutely. Learning how to use the body as one unit and learning how to not only accelerate the force, but learning how to decelerate force as well. And I think in a lot of weight lifting protocols that's an element that's missing.

MM: Absolutely, no doubt. Now, do you think that kettlebell training is fit for everyone? Or, is there a particular type of trainee that will get the most benefit out of it?

KB: I think it pretty much is fit for everyone. I mean, of course there's always going to be situations where that doesn't apply. But, a good example would be, if you go to any kettlebell competition, you're going to see a wide variety of competitors. You're going to see eight year olds, you're going to see teenagers, you're going to see people that are 60 years old. So, I mean, it definitely applies to a lot of different age groups, and it applies to a lot of different people, regardless of what their goal is.

MM: Right, exactly, great point. Now, with all the different information on kettlebells out there, a lot of people still, when they think of kettlebell training, they think of a lot of the stuff that Pavel Tsatsouline puts out, the RKC program. Which is a good all around fitness program based on some movements that are not so similar to what we see in the gym, such as swings, snatches, cleans, things like that, jerks to some degree. And then other movements that people are more familiar with, pressing, rows, squats, of that nature. So, that's one style that a lot of people are familiar with.

There is also a sport behind kettlebell training which has a long-standing history, which is based on a couple of movements. Can you tell us about the sport style of kettlebell training and how that's different than the RKC course?

KB: Got you, good question. It's going to differ in a lot of ways. I guess on the surface you're going to see the same exercises and you're going to see a lot of the same verbiage. But, that's pretty much where the similarities end. The movement style is completely different, and at least with the competition style lifting, from my experience, I haven't been to the RKC course in a long time. So, it's not really fair for me to make an assessment of what they're doing or they're not doing. But, at least in our course, I mean, there are so many different components to lifting to where there's a mechanical portion. What are you doing with your body? How are you aligning your body? How are you aligning the bell in your hand? How are you breathing? What's the movement pattern or the groove of the bell?

So, there's a lot to it. There's a lot of technique and there's a lot more to it than you would think. Then, the other difference is going to be how you program it. So, at least for me, you can definitely do like five sets of five of the kettlebells, but I've always

seen kettlebells as a better tool for work capacity. So, to do high volume sets and to program it that way is something that you're going to see a lot more of in kettlebell sport versus what you see in the RKC.

MM: Right, very good point. And in fact, the kettlebell is designed in such a way that it's really good for that strength endurance and that kind of structural integrity. How would you counter the question that some people may ask on, why can't I just do any kettlebell move with the dumbbell, including long sets, five minute sets, ten minutes sets?

KB: I think there is a lot of things you can still do with a dumbbell, so I think at the end of the day, if you're doing something, that's better than nothing. But, the kettlebell, from my experience, it's just a better fit.

For example, it's going to take some movements and it's going to make them athletically more challenging, but in other movements, it's going to give you better leverage. For example, when I press, I love the way the kettlebell comes over and it locks-in. To me, I feel like I have better leverage and it's just a better way for me to press. But, when you look at something like a kettlebell snatch, because the bell is going to travel either around or over your hand, you're dealing with a lot of excess inertia at the top of that motion, that it's going to take some skill to decelerate. That's really not something you're going to get with a dumbbell.

MM: Right, right, very good points. And also, with dumbbells you're not really getting that rack position. There's no real opportunity to rest in what we call the rack position where you're holding a kettlebell right under the chin and you're able to use your entire body to support that weight now. The same as that kettlebells are way more amiable for those long sets, because when people hear a ten minute set, they often think that someone's just banging out the reps the entire time. And for some of the elite people, that can be true. But, when I went to the sport, the first thing I noticed is how much pacing is involved with the ten minute sets and how many opportunities to look for "relaxation". It's not like you're not working, but you're able to find opportunities to conserve, re-gather energy and then push forward.

KB: Exactly, exactly. The nature of the sport, I mean, it's basically self-correcting, because you know you have to last for ten minutes and you know that you have to pace yourself, you kind of have no choice but to have good technique and to become more efficient. If not, you're either not going to last or you're not going to get the rep count you're looking for.

MM: Right, exactly. Now, the obvious benefits of the timed sets, especially in ten minutes or beyond is the fact that you're developing incredible strength endurance, incredible cardio. One thing that I think a lot of people overlook also is the fact that

you're developing incredible structural integrity. This is a question I'm getting a lot these days, because I like to do a lot of weight fast walks with some pretty heavy weight for 20-30 minutes to develop that structural integrity as well.

Can you get into structural integrity a little bit and what are some of the benefits of developing it and why people should basically pursue some of that in their training as well?

KB: Yeah, I think there's a change to like the kettlebell sport. One thing that it's going to make you very aware of, it's going to make you aware of your body. You're going to have a high level of body awareness and you're going to be very in-tune and dialed-in to what each joint is doing. So, if you want to last ten minutes and you really want to perform in an optimum level, you have to be thinking about everything. You've got to be thinking, are my knees locked? What are my hips doing? Am I rounding my back? What are my shoulders doing? How am I holding the bell? So, you need to find ways to become structurally solid number one so that you're safe, but number two, so that you can perform better.

MM: Right, exactly. Good points. Now, let's stay on the topic of the competition lifts and timed sets. What sports do you think timed set work, ten minutes and beyond? What sports do you think are most amiable, in other words, what sports are going to benefit the most from that style of conditioning?

KB: I think in general, I think anybody in any sport is going to benefit from the type of conditioning that kettlebells provide. One thing that I've noticed with all the athletes I've trained, regardless of sport, is that their work capacity goes through the roof. So, your ability to express strength over time and maintain technique is a huge benefit.

MM: And Andrew Durniat, who's also teaching at the course in the fall and who's also a kettlebell competitor, he made a really good point that he competes in a lot of Strongman competitions. And he's not the strongest guy competing, but he's able to outlast everyone else. So, when everyone else is dead towards the end of the competition, because of the structural integrity and work capacity he's developed from doing a lot of kettlebell competition work, he's able to sustain a certain level of intensity much higher, much longer than a lot of the competitors.

KB: Oh, absolutely, and I can see that being the case in that scenario. As far as other sports, I've seen a really nice carryover with martial artist and mixed martial artists and pretty much any athlete that's going to operate within a specific timeframe, because you have to learn how to move and behave efficiently within that timeframe so that you don't wear-out. When you're doing kettlebells for timed sets, especially when you train for competition, you become very aware of time and thus, you become aware of different things that are going to make you last longer. One would be pacing. So,

you're not running out there and sprinting and losing all your energy in the first minutes. You learn how to conserve that energy, you learn how to rest in different postures that tend to be somewhat uncomfortable. Especially in mixed martial arts, there's a lot of positions to where if you can relax or find ways to align your body to relax, that's going to help you perform better and then of course, the work capacity element is a no-brainer.

MM: That makes perfect sense. And it seems that when a lot of people think of strength endurance work, they think of maybe doing an exercise like a bench press or a squat for 15 to 20 reps, and then the goal is to just bang out as many reps as possible before the lactic acid becomes unbearable and you have to quit. That's more like a demonstration of endurance than actually developing any that's going to carryover to a sport like mixed martial arts where you're competing for three, five minute rounds. In some cases five, five minute rounds.

So, just the ability to exert yourself at full capacity for 30 seconds or even a minute is really not going to be the most beneficial development of the kind of endurance you need for that particular sport.

It seems that a lot of the work that you do would be a perfect fit, for example, for mixed martial arts. Now, in addition to the endurance, also developing that full-body power for stronger takedowns, more resiliency, stronger punches and kicks. Do you think that's an accurate assessment?

KB: Oh, a very accurate assessment. I think there's a lot of things about kettlebells. I mean, the general benefits we already talked about, but with kettlebells, you're always starting from the ground up. So, you're learning how to generate force in your legs and then that force is going to travel up and out to your limbs, and that's a movement that is very similar to combat to where the motion starts with the legs and then there's the punch. And then there's also the component of...the contraction rhythm is going to be the same. So, you're going from a state of being relaxed to tense, relaxed to tense, and you're learning how to manage that efficiently along that continuum.

MM: Yeah, and that's a really good point, too, especially the ability of learning how to stay in a state of relaxation and being able to go from there to full intensity at the drop of a dime. It seems like so many sports require that application.

KB: Oh, absolutely, and one thing that I found, too, is that I used to run a Brazilian jiu-jitsu club and one of the most common things is injuries. Mixed martial arts and martial arts by their very nature, it's intense. The movements, there's lots of opportunities for injuries. And with the kettlebell training, what I've found, especially since it develops all the muscles on the posterior chain, which are the ones that tend to be the weakest and the ones that get injured, the kettlebells are a nice fit in regard to injury prevention.

MM: Yeah, it's funny you bring up posterior chain, because I always talk about that benefit as well. It's clearly overlooked in our society which focuses more on vanity and how you look. So, when we look in the mirror in the morning, we're not seeing those muscles, and as a result, most people don't really think of working those muscles when they're organizing their own training programs.

Also, the fact that a lot of people have back problems, and it's not because they're doing too much work for their back, it's generally because they're not going enough work for that posterior chain. And they're just getting advice such as, don't do anything for the posterior chain, because that's going to further your back issues, which is often not the case.

KB: Oh, exactly. That's something that I've seen. I've been training people for a long time, both in the personal training arena and in martial arts. People tend to focus on what they can see. So, that's going to be the arms, the legs, the chest and people tend not to focus so much on the posterior chain, for sure.

MM: Right, exactly. Now, one of the debates in the kettlebell community is on application. Now, with the kettlebell sport focus, you tend to focus on a few exercises and focus on doing really well. So, it's focused on improving the technique, improving the performance, improving the work capacity, all of that. Something like the RKC system, for example, Pavel Tsatsouline is more exercises where it's not necessarily performance based, it's more on maybe improving your physique, improving physique composition to some degree, some of the rehab benefits as well, things along those lines. But, it seems like it has more variety and some people are more drawn to it for that reason.

Now, one of the major goals that people have is fat loss. Would you say that doing the work capacity stuff, timed sets, is a better fit for physique composition improvements or should some modification be made?

KB: I think some modifications should be made. So, I mean, if you're looking at kettlebell training as a way to change you aesthetically, then you definitely have to change it up to where I think if you think that ten minute sets probably aren't going to be the best way to make that happen. There are some people out there that due to genetics, they're going to respond to weight training, and the results are always going to be positive.

But, I would say for most, if you want to use the kettlebell in that regard, then you've got to take the intensity up a notch. So, instead of maybe doing ten minute sets, you'd be better off doing intense one minute sets, maybe taking 30 seconds off, doing another minute set, 30 seconds off, and just configuring the training in that way so that it's more high intensity and you're just getting more work in a shorter amount of time.

MM: Right, exactly, and that's a good application. That makes perfect sense. Now, for someone that wants to get into competitive kettlebell training, how would they work up to ten minute sets? What are some of the initial steps they should take?

KB: I think probably the first step is to find a good coach. Just kind of coming from a situation where the technique that I learned didn't apply to kettlebell lifting and then I had to basically un-learn all that neurology and kind of start over. So, number one, if you're interested in getting into kettlebell sport, number one, find a coach. I mean, there is a number of different nuances that are related to breathing, hand position, alignment, groove. So, that would be your starting point.

And initially, just focus on the technique. You don't have to do long timed sets. You could do five sets of 20. You could configure your rep scheme any way you want. So, I think initially, don't worry about the work capacity, get the technique. And I think a lot of people jump into the longer timed sets way too soon. So, what they end up doing is they're doing anything they can to last that ten minutes, or even five minutes, and they start to do things technique-wise that aren't positive.

So, when somebody's all gassed-out from holding a rack for four minutes, and then they decide to do their next five reps of jerk, they've kind of structurally put themselves in a position and technique-wise where they're not going to perform the way they should, because they're just too beat-up from the rack.

MM: Really good point. I mean, when you watch someone like world champion Valery Fedorenko, who also had a really good certification and is a great instructor, when you watch him do a ten minute set, the very last rep he does doesn't look any different than the first rep. There's never any breakdown in technique, because he's refined it to that point where it's perfect every single time.

If your technique starts breaking down, you're just going to breakdown, too. So, if your technique is breaking down around the five minute mark, even if you can last with mental toughness with poor technique, you're really not going to last another five minutes, most likely. And if you do, it's going to be a real ugly five minutes, visually, to watch. You're just going to have that breakdown.

KB: And I think, too, another thing that's going to kind of add to the equation is going to be body type. And to use my son as an example, I mean, he's actually got the perfect body type for the sport. So, for him, he actually could jump right into the longer timed sets. So, when he was racking, he was genuinely resting.

For me, that's not so much the case. I've pretty much got like this bosu thing going on below my chest. So, for me to try to get to my hips, that isn't going to happen. So, for me, if I'm training bigger athletes, I would start with, hey, let's focus on some

volume work. Let's make sure to get in lots of reps, let's get your technique good and we're going to develop the rack from there.

Whereas, I think a lot of other athletes that have Mitch's build or maybe Marty's build who were genetically just really gifted for the sport, they can start with the timed sets because their rack is doing exactly what it should be doing, giving them rest.

MM: Yeah, that's a great point. Like any other facet of training or even diet, things need to be personalized. And I think your advice about finding a really good coach really falls into line with that. Because, you may watch somebody on YouTube doing something who has a totally different body type than you, and you try to mimic that and it's just not going to pan out.

Like for example, I've seen you press before and you're an outstanding presser. You and I have totally different body types though. So, when I watch you doing stuff, I look at the technique and the pacing and the relaxation, but in terms of where I'm going to fix the bells for each rep, it's going to be different, and it has to be different. It's just not going to work out.

In the same way, if I watch Mitch do some pressing, I can mimic some of the things he's doing, which work out for me, but again, he and I have totally different body types. So, it's not going to pan out the same way.

And that's one thing I really like about what you, Steve and Jason Dolby do at the IKFF courses, is that you guys are really good at personalizing not just routines, but actual exercises the individual. It's not just a one fit system where everybody is expected to do the exercise the exact same way. The principles of safety are always universal, but someone like Jason is going to have a much different rack than you or me or anyone else. He trains with kettlebells and I think people need to be patient and take the time to personalize each exercise to their exact body type for those reasons.

KB: Oh, exactly, and I think there's a trend out there for pretty much any school of thought, where there's going to be a tendency to want to apply that principle to everybody and make it universal. So, the only way to lift kettlebells is this way, and it's going to apply to everybody regardless of body type.

So, I think there has to be some customization. I mean, not everybody has the same anatomy. Not everybody is going to have even in terms of their blood chemistry, people are going to have different things going on to where some people aren't going to respond very well to high volume training. Some people are going to have to maybe hit their session, then they're going to have to have more recovery time before they get to their next session, where other people are just designed to where they can work out every day.

So, there's got to be some level of customization to fit the athlete and not try so hard to make the athlete fit the paradigm every time.

MM: Yeah, exactly. Those are all great points, and just in fitness and nutrition in general, you really have to personalize stuff by looking at the person's lifestyle, their recovery abilities, their restoration abilities, their sleep, their mental state, how they handle stress. Stress management is huge.

I think you hit the nail on the head where a lot of times we read these articles in magazines and we come across these generic programs which may or may not be good programs for you. But, it's kind of like we're rolling the dice. Maybe it will work, maybe it won't. I think that's why there's so much failure with people who try any fitness regimen, it's the fact that it's never been personalized to them. They're trying to follow something that may have worked for somebody else.

Half the time these programs are written by ghost writers where they're just putting something down that sounds good. So, it's not even a program that anybody has ever used, including the person that it's supposedly written by. So, there's so much misinformation out there that I can see why so many people get frustrated with lack of training progress in general, because that personalization is not there.

One reason why all my clients do so well is the accountability factor to me, but also the fact that I'm able to personalize this stuff to them based on their goals and all the other factors I just mentioned, their lifestyle, their recovery abilities and whatnot, even hormones that do a lot of blow work. And then we're able to modify as we go along. It's a learning process and I think a lot of people make the mistake of not being willing to go through that learning process. They just want somebody to hand them a routine and not think about it.

KB: Exactly. Well said.

MM: I think that's kind of what's going on also with a lot of the debates, the polarization in the kettlebell community is that it seems that you have to be one or the other. It's like, okay, I don't want to use the kettlebell for the sport, so I don't want to learn anything that has to do with it. I just want to do this with it. Or, someone will say, well, I'm only going to be training for the sport. So, any other application of kettlebells is irrelevant to me. I don't even want to know about it.

I think it's a mistake to be that closed minded regardless of what your goals are. I mean, I'll use myself as an example. I came out of the RKC system along with Steve Cotter and Steve Maxwell and a bunch of people. We taught at all of their certifications. We all did that for many years. And then, we all went in our own directions.

But, one thing that I was always hungry for was more knowledge and how to improve performance. I wanted to learn the best techniques to improve things that I'm interested in, such as double swings and military presses and so forth. One thing I picked up after checking out Valery Fedorenko's course was again, that pacing, ideal rack positions, even the hand placement, making sure the kettlebell handle is in, riding lower in the hands, more towards the palm rather than just below the fingers. Really technical things that made a huge difference in my performance where not only can I do a lot more now, I can press heavier weights and I can do more reps, I can do it more often because that technique is so much more refined and effective that you're not burning as much energy. You're not driving your central nervous system into the ground as often. You're not using all of that tension when you don't need to.

So, I think even someone who doesn't want to compete in the sport, someone that just wants to do it for overall fitness, someone who doesn't even want to do timed sets, I still think that person will get a lot out of learning the techniques that you teach, Steve teaches, Valery teaches, and just having an open mind about that stuff. Because, whatever you want to do, ultimately, you want to look at what's the best way to get the optimal performance. And that's always going to come from the optimal technique.

KB: Oh, exactly, and I think it just comes back to people have an open mind. I think there's a certain comfort in kind of marrying yourself to a certain theoretical base or a paradigm. That kind of reminds me of some of the arguments that happen right now in kettlebells kind of remind me of some of the arguments that used to happen in martial arts where you'd have one person from one style saying, "No, karate's the best", "Boxing's the best," "Judo's the best." And now that we've kind of seen the evolution of mixed martial arts, what we've noticed is that everything has its time and its place in the right context.

So, you just have to look at your goals, you have to look at who you are as a person, and then that's going to determine what happens next and you how train. But, there's something to be learned from everybody. So, I know that's one of the goals at the Age of Quarrel course, is we want to clear up the confusion and clarify for folks that, hey, there's a lot of different ways you can use this tool.

You can use it for a lot of different goals, but most importantly, just keep an open mind and let evolution happen. So, if something better comes along, I'll be the first to bring that into my program. I'm not so married to what I'm doing now that this is the only way I'm going to do it. Actually, if I'm still doing things the same way in two years that I'm doing now, then I'm probably doing something wrong.

MM: Exactly. That's a great point, for really every facet of life. One thing I notice whenever I talk to you or Jason or Steve about your training, there's always something new that you guys have learned that you're working on, either something that came from your own training or from each other or from someone else. Like Dennis...is it Denise or Dennis?

KB: Yeah, Dennis, exactly. We've all been fortunate enough, Valery Fedorenko, tremendous coach, great guy, learned a lot from him. And via Steve and Jason, I was exposed to Dennis. Dennis just has some great information and he has a different way of looking at the sport. He has a different way of training for the sport and I'm open to that and I've seen very good results with that.

MM: On, no doubt. We'll talk a little bit more about him a little bit later, and make sure we mention his website. He actually has started writing some articles for my online magazine. So, tomorrow's issue, for example, will feature a great article from him and last month's issue also featured one.

So, yeah, again, you want to have that open mind where you don't stop learning. It's kind of like a lot of people that are overly educated. They get that PhD and then they never want to read a book again because the process of learning was so difficult and arduous that they just want to stop right there. That's an unfortunate mistake because in life, we're always learning new things. And when you stop that learning process, you stop growing, whether it's business or philosophy or training. So, there's no doubt about that.

Now, what are some of your goals right now with kettlebell training? What are some of the things you're focusing on?

KB: My goals right now are all pretty much focused on the competition element. So, my goal in the next year is to get Master of Sport not only in the long cycle, but I've now decided that I want to pretty much try to do that in all two events, so the biathlon, which is the jerk and then snatch, and then the long cycle. So, my training right now is very specific, it's very monotonous and it's very high volume. But, that's what's needed to get me where I need to be.

MM: Now, for people that are not familiar, what does Master of Sport stand for and you achieving it, what would you have to do? What do you need to do to achieve that level?

KB: Master of Sport is a ranking. So, I guess to equate it to martial arts, it could be like attaining a certain belt level. Master of Sport is something that all of us kettlebell lifters have aspired to. So, we've already had a few lifters here in the country, and my apologies if I forget any names, but Kate Imes, Scott Helsley, Marty Farrell. These are

all folks that have just kind of paved the way. They've done a great job and they've inspired the rest of us to go out there and try to do the same thing.

So, for me, it's connected to body weight, too. So, if you weigh 150, the number of reps you're going to need to get Master of Sport in the long cycle is going to be different than if you weigh over 200. Me, I'm over 200 pounds, so I'm going to need 69 reps in the long cycle, with a 32 kilogram bell, to get Master of Sport.

MM: Long cycle, clean and jerks, for people that are not familiar means, basically you clean the bells, you jerk them overhead and that's one repetition, and then you just repeat that for as many reps as possible in the designated timeframe. So, that's definitely a very ambitious goal, no doubt, and I have no doubt you'll achieve that. That's impressive.

Marty is an excellent coach. I had a chance to work with him last month, and his abilities are really impressive. I remember he did maybe 20 jerks years ago at some event I was at and then he started working with Valery and he started really putting in some extra hours on his technique and he worked up to that Master of Sport. And I think he did 60 reps on jerks with two 70 pound kettlebells.

KB: Oh, yeah, Marty's awesome. I said it before, I mean, he's arguably the best pound-for-pound lifter in the sport. When you see Marty lift at his body weight, it's almost...every rep is almost a one-rep max. When you see his set from the very beginning, you're like, wow! It looks like the whole set is work for him, but he's got awesome technique and he's paid his dues. He 100% deserves that title.

MM: Yeah, you know, you make a really good point. when you see him jerk two 70 pound kettlebells in the first rep, you can tell that that's a lot of weight. I mean, he weighs maybe 150, 155, something like that. And you're thinking, how's this guy going to survive ten minutes of that? And he does.

KB: Exactly.

MM: And every single rep looks just like that first one. So, while the whole time it looks difficult, he just keeps going. He's not breaking down, while most of us who don't have that structural integrity and that work capacity, we may make the reps look easy on the first couple, but once we get to 15 or something, bam, the body breaks right down. We can't go.

KB: Exactly.

MM: So, it's really interesting to see it in motion. I think when you hear about it, you kind of get an idea of what you think it is, and when you see it in motion, it's totally different. When I first heard about people doing hundreds of jerks in 10 minutes, I

thought they were just banging it out the entire time, just cruising as fast as possible and maybe they finished it in a couple of minutes. I didn't realize that it was ten minutes where you're pacing yourself. You may be doing one rep after another without resting, but there's a pace that's going on there.

KB: Oh, absolutely. I mean, there is a pace that's going on there and there's a lot of things to where if you were to watch a clip on YouTube, I think it gives a pretty decent representation of what's going on in the sport. But, there are a lot of things that people don't see. I mean, there's a lot of mechanics. You can move the bell an inch in your hand and that's going to make a significant difference. The ability to rest with 140 pounds on your chest, that's significant. And even when you get in and around that seven to eight minute mark, there's a definite mental component.

You have to really kind of control what type of self-talk's going on, what type of internal representation's you're seeing. So, mentally, you have to develop some toughness so that you can last and basically, not let yourself become your worst enemy. Because, as it gets harder and harder, I mean, you're going to start wanting to put the bells down. You're going to want to slow down your pace. So, there's a strong character building element. That's probably a good way to put it.

MM: Yeah, it's definitely mental toughness training, without a doubt. What's also interesting is that the pacing and the technique are also very important, even when you're not doing ten minute sets or even three minute sets. For example, when I do heavy military pressing, if I'm knocking off reps with two 97 pound kettlebells, I have to make every rep perfect, because if one rep goes bad, that's the end of the set. So, when every rep is perfect, I may be able to do five repetitions. If one rep goes bad, let's say it's the second rep, it's over at that point. So, there's no margin for error.

So, that technique is really important, really regardless of the application or the goal. Even when you're doing really heavy stuff or relatively low reps, each rep has to be solid. And when you watch Strongman competitions, when they're doing deadlifts, compared to a ten minute set, they're not doing a lot of reps. They're doing many as many reps in a minute or two. But, what you find is that the people that have perfect technique on every single rep, they can cruise all the way through. But, the people that all of a sudden their technique breaks-down and one rep goes bad, it's usually over at that point. They try to regroup, they try to reset, but generally, the set usually ends right there.

KB: Oh, exactly. So, I mean, the technique part is just a huge part. The technique is what really gives you the ability to last and some other variables are definitely integrated there, but that's where I think some kettlebell schools of thought out there, they really don't... They say, well, it really doesn't matter. You don't have to worry about hand

position or shoulder position. And I really think regardless if your goal is competition or regardless if your goal is fitness, you want to make sure mechanically you do it the right way so that you're efficient and so that you're safe.

MM: Yeah, exactly. You want to avoid injuries. You don't want to reinforce that bad technique just to get a repetition, no matter what. You basically want the performance to be perfect in addition to the goal achievement and whatnot.

Now, just backtracking a little bit, I thought about something that you mentioned when you basically compared the way the kettlebell world is now to martial arts. I remember when the UFC first started, not too many people were familiar with Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and Royce Gracie was able to go in and just clean house. And a lot of times, it was the element of surprise where he was able to beat opponents that were much bigger than him, a lot of them much better conditioned. But, they just didn't know what was coming.

When people learned about Brazilian jiu-jitsu and more people started doing it, there was no longer that ace card that people used to have. Now these guys were getting beaten where historically they were able to beat much better opponents.

But, during that whole time period, everyone was saying Brazilian jiu-jitsu was the best. You don't need to learn anything else. You don't need to do wrestling, you don't need to do muay-thai. If you master Brazilian jiu-jitsu like Royce and Hickson and some of these other guys, and you're going to be a superior martial artist. That just didn't pan-out over the long run. Over the long haul, people adapted.

I think that we can learn something from that with training in general. Where if you're just adamant of doing things one way, and one way only, you're only going to get so far. And I always encourage people; I have a lot of people who come to me with business questions and people from different camps going, I took this certification and I don't feel the need to basically learn anything more. I just want to get this stuff out there.

I think people really miss out when they just relegate themselves to one style of thought. Again, not only themselves, but their clients. Because, if you really want to understand the martial arts, for example, you want to learn a lot of different facets of it. And if you really want to understand kettlebell training, you don't want to just limit yourself to one application. You want to be very familiar with the myriad applications so that not only you can benefit from it, but your clients can as well.

KB: Oh, absolutely, and I mean, to go back to that martial arts analogy, if you talk to any high level martial artist, they're going to train in a multitude of disciplines even if that's really not going to be part of their fight plan. But, they want to understand it. So,

even if I'm not going to be the guy that goes out and throws a lot of kicks, I at least want to understand kicks. And I want to understand everything that's centered around that.

And the same thing goes for training. Maybe I'm not going to be the best power lifter in the world, but I at least want to understand enough about it so that I can pass along some of the benefits of training that way to my clients. And then, if that's the direction they want to go, then they should find somebody who's really good in that, and that's their core skill set.

MM: Yeah, exactly, like even in the business world, you may not want to be a marketing master, but you want to know enough about it that you can get your business going. And that if you do hire someone to take over that for you, you at least have enough knowledge that you can find somebody that's good, rather than shooting in the dark.

The same thing goes with the accounting. You may not want to be an accountant for your business and understand all the different tax laws, but you want to understand enough that you're able to decide who's good and who isn't when you want to hire someone or delegate that job out to somebody else.

KB: Oh, absolutely, 100%.

MM: Now, one thing that I think a lot of people can relate to in the country is the fact that we're really in an obesity epidemic. I mean, Americans are fatter than they've ever been in the history of our country. People are fatter than they've ever been in the history of the human civilization. And there's a lot of reasons for that, inactivity being one of the, diet being a huge one. Most diets are basically just entertainment rather than really nourishing us.

But, let's focus on inactivity. A lot of kids now don't have PE programs in school. They don't have any activities outside of school such as sports or martial arts. A lot of them are just eating and playing video games and then just repeating that process every day.

Now, your son Mitch got into kettlebell training not too long ago and he's been doing really well. He's really gotten into it, he's making a lot of waves on YouTube. People are incredibly impressed with his abilities and his accomplishments. But, he wasn't always an athlete. How did Mitch get into kettlebell training and what do you think inspired him to want to gravitate towards it?

KB: I think he was at a point where I think like a lot of kids that were his age...you know, he's doing the video games, he's eating Doritos, he's having fun and physical

activity just didn't sound like a lot of fun. And I think there just came a point where he wanted to make a change.

At that point... I've always seen different athletic gifts in him, but I was like, okay. I made it like his thing. I think it's important not to go off on a tangent here, but if you are training kids, it's got to be their thing.

And so, when he first started out, he might come in and do just a couple of reps and that was pretty much it for the day. And then eventually, he grew to love it himself. So, my goal was that I want him to love kettlebells because he loves it, not because I do.

So, he just got into the training and started having some really good results in competition. People started saying really nice things to him. Larry and Steve and yourself, and for a young guy who's fourteen, fifteen, that felt good and he realized, hey, this is something I'm good at. And now, this is pretty much all he does. He loves to train. He's in the gym every day, he's working hard every day, he studies the sport and he's had outstanding results. I'm really proud of him.

MM: Yeah, our mutual friend, John Heffron, a well-known comedian made a point that he basically felt like he got spanked after training with you and Mitch, because you guys... Mitch's abilities were so far ahead of his and the only thing that made him feel good about the training is that Mitch had to go home early to work on some homework and he didn't.

KB: And actually, kudos to John. I mean, he actually trains hard and he does the martial arts. So, I guess in John's defense, I mean, he's got a skill set way beyond his comic skills. I mean, he actually trains really hard and he's a fanatic. He does martial arts and so, I think for John, the kettlebells are a new thing. But, it's always nice to hear other people say nice things about my son. So, that's cool.

MM: Yeah, no doubt. He actually called me up after he trained with you guys, and just raving about how impressed he was with both of you. And it really got him excited about training. He's always looking for innovative ways himself to stay in shape on the road, and enjoy training. He's been doing it for a long time, that after talking to you guys he really started doing more of the competition style lifts and more of the timed sets. And he's loving it. Every time I talk to him you can tell he's really into it.

KB: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, he's training hard and actually, I think he's going to be coming to one of our courses coming up here pretty soon. I saw him just a couple of weeks ago and his lifts look good. He's working hard and his technique is solid.

MM: Oh, yeah, no doubt. Now, what are some of the benefits of young people getting into physical training, besides the fat loss and being healthier. Do you think that there's a carryover into confidence and other arenas, such as academics and just being more confident in general?

KB: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, even to use myself as an example. I look back and when I got involved in martial arts, my grades were not good. I was not focused and that just gave me an outlet and that improved my self-image, my self-confidence. I felt better about myself. And when you take a teenager and you give them that, that's really the fuel. And it's positive fuel.

What I've noticed with Mitch is that... I mean, everything's improved. I think as your conditioning improves and as your physicality improves and you get in better condition, that actually changes your brain chemistry, your body chemistry to where emotionally you're going to feel better just because.

And then, when you kind of tie-in the self-image element and just feeling proud that you're out there and you're accomplishing things and that you're doing things that are difficult. You go into the gym and you've got that slightly fearful feeling and then you come out on the other side, it's a great workout and you feel like a million bucks.

MM: Yeah, those are all great points. And in particular, changing the brain chemistry, I think that's a very important point, because I think any time you take charge of your life in any capacity, small or big, your brain chemistry changes. For example, I can relate to what you said about grades not being so great and so forth when you first got into martial arts training and how that improved as you started training more, because I was in the same boat.

When I took charge of physical training, that made me want to improve my diet, because you realize how important diet is with recovery and performance. So, just by starting the physical stuff and not changing the diet at that point, that motivated me to improve diet.

And then, when you start taking charge of one area, you kind of have this urge to start taking charge of other areas. So, you're in school now, you think, okay, I don't want to just live for working out, I want to start improving other areas.

Now, I was able to transform my body by doing some training and diet, now I can start transforming my academics. And then, as an adult, as you get older, you start thinking about, what do you exactly want to do with your life. And because you've learned the skill set of taking charge of one area, you can start taking charge of other areas as well.

And this is something that I encourage people with, with a lot of the information I put out there is, I don't want to just teach people how to be healthy, diet-wise and training-wise. While that's very important, the big picture is, what's the quality of your life like? If you hate what you do, the quality of your life is not going to be that great. You could have the best relationship at home, you could have a great workout system you're enjoying, you could have nice vacations, but if the majority of your time, which is our jobs, if that's not enjoyable, then you can forget about everything else being maximized.

But, I think when you start taking charge of different areas, you naturally have this itch to start taking charge of more. It starts becoming addictive, per se.

KB: Oh, absolutely. I just think it creates like a positive inertia and I think especially with kids, they're kind of a victim of that. So, if they have negative inertia in their life, all it's going to take is a couple of negative things and that's going to create a direction. And I also think the reverse can happen, which is, you get a couple of positive things happening for a young person, that create more inertia. And like you said, they kind of want everything to be congruent. If suddenly you feel like you're in good shape and you look better, so maybe you want to get better grades. You want to be that whole package. So, you want to look at other areas of your life and make sure that they're in alignment with what you're doing in the gym.

MM: Yeah, I think to a large degree the body and brain are always looking for balance. So, I think when you spend a lot of time improving your body, you get to a point where you're going, okay, now I need to start working on my brain. Now, I need to start working on my philosophy on life. Now, I need to start working on improving the job I want to do.

I've actually had people tell me that when they started training, following some of my advice or some of my online clients, when they started getting results in terms of fat loss and they started feeling better and they started having more energy, it kind of unleashed a lot of creative forces, where they started realizing that they had been settling for a lot of things in life. Maybe they were in relationships that they didn't really want to be in, but they didn't have the mental fortitude to cut through those and move on. Maybe they were doing jobs that they hated, but they just learned to deal with it and accept it and now they've developed a strength in another area and they're able to say, okay, you know what? This is exactly what I want to do with my life. I'm going to quit this job and push forward, and I'm willing to take that risk and deal with that pain and inertia to push forward.

KB: Exactly.

MM: Yeah, no doubt. Now, back on kettlebell training. What do you think are some of the common mistakes that people make? You definitely touched on some already. But, what are some of the more common mistakes that you see out there when you're training people?

KB: I'd say probably the most common mistake is that ego tends to get in the way, and especially with men. They want to come in, they want to grab the biggest bell and that's a bad idea for a couple of reasons. Obviously, for safety, you could get injured. But, it's basically a starting point for bad technique.

When you're trying to lift a kettlebell that's too heavy for you, you're going to compensate and mechanically do things you probably shouldn't. So, that would be number one.

I think number two...and actually these are in no order, but I would say a lot of people, they start training and I would say do some research, find a good coach. I mean, there's good coaches all over the country. Find a good coach. There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Find somebody that knows what they're doing, somebody who's competed or maybe even not competed, but really has a solid, working knowledge of the mechanics of the body and can really kind of give you the whole picture.

I mean, there's lots of elements. I hear horror stories all the time of people come in, they find a kettlebell trainer and a lot of kettlebell trainers equate – or just trainers in general – equate, well, if I make somebody...if I torture them, and I put them through this grueling workout, that's what a good trainer does. In some cases, that's a good fit. But, in many cases, find somebody who's going to take the time to understand who you are as a person, what's your physiology, what's your lifestyle, what's your goals, what's your background as far as athletics and injuries. Because, those are all things that you should factor in, into what type of program they're going to have you do and what type of workout they're going to have you do.

MM: Yeah, excellent points, and I think a lot of trainers do that where they really put someone through the grinder, first time clients. I think one of the main reasons why they do that is the fact that most people are stimulus addicts, period, and not just within the context of training, but everywhere else as well. When it comes to food, when it comes to entertainment, when it comes to... I mean, we're in the entertainment addicted society where we have to be entertained all the time.

They have TVs at grocery stores now so that for the few minutes while you're standing in line, you can see what's on Entertainment Tonight. I mean, that's where we've gotten. And if that's not enough, we all have our iPods, we all have our iTunes, we all have our different entertainment systems that we can put in our pocket and carry

with us everywhere so we don't have to have one minute of life where we're not being entertained.

I think what happens with a lot of people who go for a training session is, they equate being wiped-out and feeling beaten up with being a great workout. So, sometimes when a trainer puts someone through a workout which was more appropriate, the client never comes back because they're thinking, oh, this person doesn't understand my needs. I want to feel wiped-out after every workout. I want to be beaten up.

I even have people who tell me, oh, I want to train with you and my goal is to go through your hardest workout where I'm puking in a bucket. And that's their goal. Because, we're so stimulus focused, we're thinking that wiping ourselves out is somehow an achievement that we should be proud of.

In reality, we're just breaking our bodies down. We're not building ourselves up. I mean, you should feel great after most of your workouts. Every once in a while, sure, you're going to have to push it, especially if you have a goal or whatnot. But, most of the time, a workout should be something that really improves your energy and makes you feel better, rather than something where you need to take a two hour nap because you wiped yourself out so much or you can't repeat that workout for a week because you burned-out your central nervous system to such a high degree.

KB: Oh, exactly. I think there's a time and place for that, especially when you get to higher levels. I mean, the only way to get to that higher level is to take your intensity and your volume up a notch. But, I think especially for people that are first getting into kettlebells, I think there's something that attracts them to the kettlebells. It has this hardcore type of feel. So, they're like, I want to go through this brutal workout.

But, I think the best thing to do is for the first several workouts, just focus on technique. Learn the proper breathing. Learn the proper mechanics and have fun. And then, the brutal workouts have their place, but they're down the road.

MM: Absolutely, no doubt. Now, with beginners, do you think that beginners should focus on one kettlebell work, or is it okay for beginners to jump in with double kettlebell training? What do you think about that?

KB: I think in general, I think unilateral work is a good place to start, because you're lifting something and it's much easier to focus on one object rather than two. It's much easier to balance one object rather than two. But, everybody's different. So, you're going to have some clients that come in, they're very de-conditioned, and they may stay with one bell for a long time. Other people are going to come in and they're very athletic

naturally, and they acclimate very quickly, and these are people that can even migrate into double kettlebell work within the same workout.

MM: No doubt. Now, you're a big fan of competition kettlebells. Is that the gold standard for everyone, or does it matter? Is that only something that competitive kettlebell lifters should use? Or, do you think that competition style kettlebells are the best fit for everybody, regardless of goals?

KB: I think in some scenarios, you're going to have people who have exceptionally small frames, and for them, like the smaller kettlebells, they're going to get at a sporting goods store. That could be an absolutely good fit for them, and that's enough.

I think in general, though, the competition bells are superior just because the dimensions don't change, regardless of weight. And as a result, there's not going to be a learning curve every time that you move up in weight. Whereas, if I start with a really light bell that's small, and then I move up in weight and then the bell dimensions change, suddenly I'm finding myself changing alignment, I'm changing hand position and that happens every time I jump up in weight. So, I think having that consistency in the dimensions of the bell is the best way to go.

MM: Yeah, so basically once you learn the technique, you've learned it and you don't have to keep relearning stuff every time you move to a heavier bell.

KB: Exactly.

MM: More carryover back and forth, and vice versa. You may be someone who works with 88's a lot, doing maybe low reps, five or six reps, and then you want to start working on high reps with 70's, but there's going to be a transition of relearning the technique with a smaller sized bell. So, seeing that in the long run, doing the competition style bells is more efficient.

KB: Yeah, I think so. And nothing really raises your T levels more than squatting with a couple of pink bells. It's pretty awesome.

MM: Yeah, exactly. It's like you said, that's motivation to move up quickly. Where if that's your starting point, you don't want to be there for long. So, you have an additional incentive to graduate to the next level, no doubt.

Now, what nutrition recommendations do you have for kettlebell trainees in general, and more specifically, kettlebell sport athletes?

KB: I would say number one, I think most people have a jump and when I train people their first goal is, okay, I'm going to go to the supplement store and I'm going to buy creatine. I'm going to get glutamine and beta alanine and I think those are all very

good things, but I think your first point should be, you want to... Kind of think in terms of a hierarchy. You want to make sure your general health is good.

So, you want to make sure you're eating in such a way to where it's supporting your heart health, your liver, your blood, your lungs, et cetera. And I think once you establish that solid base, where you're eating good and you're healthy, and then, that's the point where you can start adding in the sport specific supplementation.

And you and I've talked about this before, and I mean, you've been a fantastic mentor to me as far as, hey, these are the things that you can use, Ken, that are going to help speed recovery. These are the things that you can take before a workout and those are things that people should definitely take the time learning.

I think people should go into supplements with a reasonable outlook. I mean, you're not going to take something and if you feel something incredibly noticeable, then it's probably just the stimulant effect. But, there are things like glutamine and beta alanine that are going to speed recovery. They're going to act as lactic buffers. So, there's a lot of benefit. Obviously a multi-vitamin, a multi-mineral is a good idea. Zinc and magnesium are excellent for improving the quality of your sleep and they play a role in having a healthy endocrine system. So, I think that's something that people should definitely look into.

And I think that's a very good reason for people to come to the Age of Quarrel course, just because I know that's something you're presenting on. I know that's something you're fanatical about, and so there's going to be some good information in that regard.

MM: Oh, yeah, no doubt. I'm actually doing... I've actually done a lot of research on optimizing brain chemistry, the four main neurotransmitters in the brain. And that's not only important for just general wellbeing and for people who want to lose weight. If you don't have an optimal brain chemistry, you're always going to crave those unhealthy foods. And until you address your brain chemistry, you're just not going to be able to get over those addictions. That's really what they are. I mean, the wrong food choices often stimulate parts of the brain that are basically parts that are stimulated when people take opiates, heroin, different drugs and so forth.

So, food is a drug and we have to realize that it had drug-like side effects. And we have to focus on the best fits for us, the most healthy ingredients and the right stuff. And without that optimal brain chemistry, in addition to not having that wellbeing and not being able to develop the body you want, your performance in whatever you do, whether athletic or not, is just not going to be optimal.

So, that's going to be definitely one of the key things I talk about at the course in addition to hormone optimization and how to do that naturally, meaning not going to a hormone replacement or anything along those lines.

Let's talk about your agility training. You're going to be doing a section on agility training at the course. Now, there's a rumor floating around that you were inspired to develop this agility training after watching Jean-Claude Van Damme's infamous dancing scene in Kickboxer. Now, is this a dance routine that you're actually going to be doing at the course, or have you modified this?

KB: Well, I mean, who has not been inspired by that part of the movie?

MM: That took effort for me to get out with a straight face, by the way people. We are joking here when I say that. Ken's system is not really...well, maybe it is, if we're talking about his nightclub mobility and agility routine, I think is actually based on the Van Damme routine. But, what you're going to see at the course is only marginally based on that, if anything.

KB: Oh, absolutely. I mean, who can really live up to Van Damme? So, what I'm going to present is definitely a modified version. But, with the agility training that I'm going to present, I mean, it's really kind of an extension off the joint mobility training. And I've always thought of agility training is kind of like the calculus of movement. Where if you learn higher level movements, and not that I'm going to have anybody do a handspring, maybe... But, if you can learn how to do a handspring and you understand the different mechanics and all the different appropriate receptive things involved in that, when you go back to simpler movements, they're much easier.

So, for me, what I've noticed is that I did a lot of agility training early-on, and because I've kept it up, it's kind of stayed with me as I've aged and as I've also increased in weight. It's just neurologically I think it's made me a smarter athlete to where because I have a background in gymnastics and martial arts, for me to learn other movements has been easy.

I think because of due to the nature of these movements, I really have not movement problems, per se. So, all my joints, they move through a full range of motion and that's made me a better kettlebell lifter, since I really don't have the parking brakes on, so to speak.

I notice with a lot of lifters, especially beginning, they have tight hip flexors, they have tight shoulders, they especially have a tight thoracic area. So, they're really not able to express their conditioning and their athleticism to the degree that they could. But, when you do the mobility training and the agility training, it kind of opens the flood gates, so to speak, in that regard.

MM: Yeah, I think you touched on a great point in how it's basically a life enhancement system in the sense that a lot of people are in pain, and as a result the quality of their life is compromise. I mean, if you can't move well, you're basically not going to be feeling great. A lot of people have really bad attitudes and they're miserable because they're constantly in pain.

For any of us that have ever gone through any kind of physical ailment, like for me, I had a really bad case of pneumonia where one of my lungs had to be drained. During that whole process you're just miserable the entire time. You can't enjoy anything. Sitting on a couch watching TV, you're still miserable because you're in that constant pain.

So, it allowed me to think about how people who have agility and mobility issues may feel the same way. A lot of people may not want to do gymnast stuff, but many people have a hard time just walking around the block without feeling some pain or lifting even light kettlebells without feeling pain.

So, I think that agility and joint mobility is really, really important. I also think it has a very large following. Like, for example, Steve Maxwell who's an incredible joint mobility guy, he taught a great session at The Boys Are Back in Town workshop in 2007. And that was basically the most popular part of the DVD set. I think so many people could see right away where this will help them with whatever issues they have.

Last year, at the collision course, John Hines did also a great session on alignment and posture, and people loved that session for the same reason. I've had people tell me that just from following some of his recommendations, pain that they've had their entire lives is being reduced or has gone away.

So, this is really powerful stuff and I think people forget that fitness...the ultimate goal of fitness really is to improve life quality. It's not about being able to lift something really heavy once and then huffing and puffing for ten minutes afterwards to recovery. Or, you don't want to be that guy who can deadlift 600 pounds, but he can't carry his groceries to the car without huffing and puffing, or a flight of stairs kills that guy.

It goes back to that life quality where you don't want to just be someone who's strong in the gym or in your workouts. You want to be strong everywhere else.

KB: Oh, exactly. So, I mean, if you're able, just on even a basic level on the things we're going to be doing at the course, I mean, some will be advanced, most are definitely applicable to anyone to where like you said, if you can move better and you can articulate each joint through its full range of motion, numerous benefits. It prevents injury, it prepares you for activity and it's a performance enhancer. It really takes the

brakes off your body and it allows you to move in ways to where...move in ways you want to move.

MM: Exactly. One thing about this course is, it goes way beyond just being a kettlebell course. That's a big component of it. We're going to focus on a lot of kettlebell stuff and cut through a lot of the confusion and show the myriad of benefits. But, we also are going to have a lot of additional information. Ken's doing his agility section. Jason's doing some Indian club stuff, which is basically taking joint mobility to the next level. So, if you're looking for that next step for joint mobility, I mean, that's it right there. And then, Steve Cotter's going to be doing some incredible body weight stuff. I'm going to focus on hormone optimization.

Now, what all of this stuff has in common is the fact that it will improve your kettlebell game or whatever else you're trying to improve. It's going to improve the quality of your life. So, this is really more of a life quality enhancing seminar than anything else, because it goes way beyond kettlebell training. I mean, all of us have worked on our own interests to develop additional skill sets to improve our clients' results. And what's cool is we're bringing that all together in one course where you're going to have all of that information and then get a free video of the actual course you're attending to make sure that retention is 100%.

So, I think sometimes people are intimidated to attend a course like the Age of Quarrel because there's so much information that's being disseminated. They think, I'm not going to remember any of this. That's a valid argument. But, when you have that video of the actual course, your retention now potentially goes up to 100%. So, that's really not an excuse for wanting to come out to the course.

And at the same time, some people may be thinking, well, I'll just wait for the video to come out. And that's fine, but you're not going to get the same experience as somebody who's attending and then gets the video. Because, we're not that. I mean, we're there on your TV when you're watching it, but we're not in the room with you, correcting your form and answering your questions and whatnot.

So, I mean, if really want to get the full experience, you want to attend the course and then you want to take the video that you get for free, probably about a month after the course as an incredible reinforcement tool.

So, the course is actually going to be in Los Angeles November 9th through 11th. It's a three day course, eight hours each day. We actually cancelled the New York City course because we just weren't getting the numbers we wanted. In LA we're definitely getting a really nice turnout. We're getting more people registering every day. So, make sure your register today. Don't put it off, because we want you at the course and we want to make sure we have a spot for you.

But, let's wrap-up, Ken, with the IKFF cert as well, because one question that I get a lot is from people who are just getting into kettlebell training. They love it and now they want to become instructors. It's not like the good ole days where there was only one option. I mean, when I started, if you wanted to become a kettlebell instructor, you went to the RKC because that was the only option, and you went from there.

Now, there's a variety of options. What makes the IKFF different than some of the other options out there?

KB: I would say number one is that the other certifications, there's a lot of good certifications out there. So, I have really nothing negative to say and it's really not fair for me to make any commentary on what they're doing, just because it's been such a long time since I've experienced what they're doing.

But, with what we're doing, basically we've looked at all the things that we thought should be part of a certification. That includes everything from what happens before the certification, of course, what happens after certification and even the post-certification support that happens afterward.

I think with a lot of courses just in general, you show up to the course, you may learn great stuff, and then the relationship ends. For us, we want to continually, for the people that go through our course and become part of the family and part of the team, we want to give them a number of different resources that are going to benefit them in a multitude of ways.

As far as the course itself, we have a joint mobility segment and in the course, we cover all the classical list and for us, our focus is really threefold. So, we want to make sure that people understand the technique. And with the technique, do they understand the proper breathing? Do they understand the proper alignment? And probably most importantly, do they know how to coach it? So, do they know the teaching cues, do they know the drills to use, and then, even part of that process also is the third point. How do you market yourself? So, if you go to a certification, then what happens? What's the next step? Those are all things that Steve and I talk about.

MM: Yeah, it's a great course. I had a chance to check it out when you guys were in Vegas. I was really impressed on not only how it was organized, but how you guys teach. You could tell people in the room were having a really good time and you guys were very approachable for questions and whatnot.

I think really what differentiates the course is the extracurricular activities that you guys provide as well. I mean, Jason was telling me about how you, Steve...how the three of you guys are going to be teaming up now to do basically the equivalent of what the guys from the Thunder from Down Under show do, in Vegas. You guys are going to

start doing that for your audience after each certification. I think that's going to make you guys the premier certification by a long-shot.

KB: Oh, absolutely, and I think the three of us probably look better in bowties and spandex than any other team out there. So, yeah, solid.

MM: Yeah, no doubt. That will make a big difference.

Ryan, do we have any questions?

RM: Yeah, you guys got quite a few. I don't know if you want to... You have about 26 of them.

MM: Okay, well, I mean, Ken, do you have some time to start drilling through some of these questions?

KB: Sure, for sure.

MM: Okay, let's start going down some of the questions and we'll take it from there.

RM: All right, I'll read these off for you. Some people wrote quite a bit of information in the questions. So, the first one is from Clint Clark. "First off, thanks for having the teleseminar. Ken, do you incorporate body weight training into your protocol? If so, what specific body weight exercises do you prefer, and how do you feel they translate to kettlebell training?"

He's got a couple parts to this question. "Also, if you could only do one kettlebell exercise for the rest of your life, which one would it be and why?" I'll let you go off on those for a sec.

KB: I would say the first kettlebell exercise for me, what's probably going to give you the most bang for your buck is going to be the long cycle. So, that's going to be a clean and a press or a clean and a jerk. Competition-wise, the long cycle refers to a clean and jerk.

As far as the other question, for me, the body weight training is really going to be my mobility training. So, to give an example workout, the very first thing I do when I go into the gym is do 20 minutes of joint mobility. So, I'm rotating the neck, moving the shoulders, articulating my spine, moving my hips, knees, et cetera. And then doing things to raise my body temperature.

The middle part of my workout or the bulk of my workout is going to be the kettlebells. And then at the end, there's more mobility work and stretching, and of course agility work. So, that would be the extent of my body weight stuff.

RM: He also asks, “When working towards heavier kettlebell weight, being that there is like some of a large jump to the next weight, what do you recommend to kind of make that jump more attainable?”

KB: I would say with that, with some of the kettlebells, there’s a big jump as you move from one weight to the other. There’s really no easy way around that other than when you do move up to that next bell, don’t try to take your volume through the roof. Actually, kind of go back to the starting point which is, just get your technique down. Make sure your technique is good.

I’ve seen more people get injured, they get excited, they move up to the 32 kilograms, their volume’s is way too much. They’re intensity is way too much. They get overtrained and/or they get hurt. So, take it slow.

RM: All right. With that, is there a set rep that you would recommend when you could do a certain amount of weight for a certain amount of reps if you should move up to that next heavier bell?

KB: That all kind of depends on what your goals are. So, if it’s general fitness, if you get to a point where, let’s say on a double squat where you’re doing five sets of ten, maybe that’s a good signal that you should move up in weight. With competition lifting, you may already be doing, let’s say, 100 reps, but your goal could be 200 reps. So, you’re going to stay at that same weight and just add more volume.

RM: Awesome. The next one is from Mike House and he’s in Texas. “What are your thoughts on body weight resistance, gymnastics fitness type workouts?” He’s been experimenting with them for about three weeks and it feels like his introduction to kettlebells three years ago.

KB: No, it’s good stuff. I think anytime you diversify your workouts, it’s a good thing. I think at the end of the day you’ve got to pick a focus and you’ve got to decide what you want to be good at, and then you just have to become a laser beam, focus on it, get your goal, then move on to the next one.

I think a lot of people try to become too good at too many things at one time. So, I would say pick a focus, but there’s absolutely nothing wrong with exploring other paradigms, doing the body weight training, the gymnastics, do stuff with battling ropes. I mean, it’s all good stuff.

RM: Next one comes from Dan in Los Angeles. He’s 32, he’s been lifting kettlebells for three years, primarily the 24 kilogram. He’s recently developed tendonitis in his knees from playing basketball. The swings, squats and deadlifts really bother his knees

unless he wears braces. Are there any exercises or routines you can suggest to strengthen his legs that won't put excessive strain on the knee?

KB: I think a lot of the kettlebell lifts are good, just because there's not an excessive knee bend involved. So, a lot of the clients that I've worked with and a lot of people that have attended the courses, they had knee problems that prevented them from doing squatting and other things. But, a lot of the kettlebell lifts are almost like a quarter squat. So, he may be able to still do some of those.

But that said, at the end of the day, I mean, you always want to get with your own trainer or your own therapist and you want to prescribe a routine that's going to keep you safe. So, I can answer that question in a general way, but to answer it in a specific way really wouldn't be ethical on my end.

MM: I agree with Ken completely. And just to jump in real quick, I always recommend people go to someone like an active release technique practitioner. You just go to ART.com. What you really want to do is get to the underlying issue, where the problem is coming from. Because, people always want to go, what exercise can I do for this, that? You have to ask yourself, why do you have the injury in the first place?

These active release technique people are really good at assessing that and treating that. So, now you don't have to avoid a lot of those exercises that you couldn't do when you had the injuries.

KB: Absolutely.

RM: Mike, this one's actually for you, but it's more of a fact, I think. Michael Rodell from Pasadena, Texas wanted you to know that there's a documentary on YouTube about the origins of the Russian Mafia. He put many of them in prison during World War II and it showed them working out with kettlebells circa 1942 to 1945. I think he just wanted you to know that.

MM: Okay. Cool. More reason to use kettlebells, right?

RM: Joseph Durham, "Which exercises give you the most bang for your buck and which ones build strength most effectively, generally speaking, and which are most effective for conditioning in a general sense?"

KB: Generally I would say I still have to go back to the long cycle, just because it has so many elements to it. You've got a vertical pull, a horizontal pull. You've got a quad element, a glute element. So, it pretty much hits every muscle in the body. And anybody that's ever done a ten minute long cycle set, it's brutal. I mean, it's going to take your work capacity through the roof.

MM: Yeah, just to jump in on that, I mean, as trainers, we get that question all the time, what's the one best exercise that everyone should do? What's the one exercise...if you could only do one exercise, what would you do? The reality is, we're not limited to any of those things. We don't have to pick one exercise. No one is putting a gun to our head saying, this is the only exercise you can do for the rest of your life.

There's no real one exercise that's going to be the best fit for everybody. You want to work in a way that's balanced so you can avoid injuries and so forth. Moreover, you're just going to get bored out of your mind if you just do one exercise all the time. So, you want to...focusing on a few things and doing them really well, I completely agree with that. But, there is nothing wrong with modifying a couple of things, doing similar type exercises or similar protocols to keep training interesting.

Like Ken mentioned that he doesn't do ten minute sets every single time that he works out. Sometimes he does sprint sets where you do maybe a minute full capacity or five sets of one minute sets, five sets of two minute sets. That's just an example of similar but different, which is not going to compromise his goals. It's going to further it.

But, the whole notion of there's only one exercise... I mean, what are people going to do when they get that answer? It's like, okay, this is the only exercise that you need to do. That's all your going to do is that one exercise? No. You need to have... You don't have to have variety like a bodybuilding magazine says where you chance the exercises every workout, but you want to have enough variety where you're getting full body balance, strength and conditioning.

RM: Awesome. I'll go on to the next thing here. Tom from Arkansas asks, "How does someone new to kettlebell training decide whether to compete in the long cycle or biathlon?"

KB: I think that's almost going to come down to a personal preference to where...I would say this probably sounds like an overly simplistic answer. But, try out the different movements and then find out what's a better fit for you and where your talents lay.

RM: The next question is kind goes with that one, from Kevin. "What is a simple logical progression that someone new, starting GS can follow?"

KB: I would say a simple progression is pick the weight that you want to work with and then...and this is going to depend on your body type, too, to where you might have the ideal body type for the sport where you can actually utilize the rack. So, maybe you're going to start out doing timed sets. Maybe you're going to do a five minute set, a three minute set and then a two minute set. Whereas people with a bigger type frame,

maybe they're going to start off just focusing more on volume and technique. So, they're going to do multiple sets of 15 or 20 just so they get the volume work in and they improve the technique.

From there, the goal is to increase the time and usually, that's the number one goal. There are lots of way to get to the same place. But, number one, try to make it to that ten minute mark and then start to build the reps in.

So, for example, in the jerk or in the long cycle, if you can go five reps a minute for ten minutes, then maybe take it back down to six minutes and then try to bump your cadence up to maybe six to eight per minute.

RM: Awesome. Next one we'll go to, Matt Taylor asks, "Can you tell me what the best kettlebell exercise is for fixing round shoulders?" He wants to improve his posture.

KB: I would say number one, improving posture, that could be a function of he may need to improve his mobility, specifically there in his spine, in the cervical area. So, mobility work is always a good place to start. In terms of kettlebell movements, almost all of them, the clean, the snatch, they're going to involve working that posterior chain, which will, over time, probably bring those shoulders up and back.

Number one, you've just got to be cognizant of it. So, if you've got a bad posture, repetition, practice having a good posture all day long.

MM: Yeah, and sometimes that can come from doing too much of one motion such as maybe you're doing too much pressing and you're not doing enough pulling. So, maybe doing some pull-ups, and the more particular, bent over row, which is an exercise that nobody's excited about, but it's an exercise that has a lot of benefits for your back and pulling those shoulders back.

I mean, I like to balance a lot of my pressing work with pulling motions to avoid any of that rounding forward. When you see people who do a lot of pressing...and also pull-ups, actually. Because, if you're doing behind the neck pull-ups, that will pull it back more. But, if you do a lot of military pressing and pull-ups, you're generally bringing your shoulders forward, especially if you already have tightness. So, doing some motions where you're consciously pulling things back, like a bent over row, will definitely help.

RM: Moving on to the next question. There are a couple in here, Ken, about your power breathing technique from watching, Good Luck Chuck.

MM: Yeah, Ken, please. Please elaborate on that. You know what, I think I'm going to have to keep that one a mystery for the course. I don't think it's fair to all the people who are paying their hard-earned cash to come out to the fall course to get that kind of

information on this one. So, I think...I'll leave it up to you, Ken, but I think we should keep that one a mystery for a little bit longer.

KB: Naw, thank you Mike. I mean, I agree. That's something that's highly specialized and it's evolved and progressed over years of training, and that's something I just don't feel comfortable giving out for free.

MM: It's something that Ken and I often discuss and we've had a lot of emails go back and forth on how to really optimize it and some pretty cool stuff has come out of it. But, I think more test-driving needs to be done before we can really disclose all the benefits of that.

KB: Absolutely. Or, you can just try, rent the movie, Good Luck Chuck, and see if you can find the scene. And hey, bonus points to you if you can figure it out and send us a message.

MM: Yeah. Again, Ken's one of those really innovative guys who just comes up with interesting ideas from places that are not training related. Like, I think you've developed the glimmering technique after watching HBO's, "True Blood". So, I'm looking forward to seeing that method at the fall courses as well.

KB: Oh, absolutely. Yep, that's right up there with the breathing technique and I'm excited to show folks.

MM: Yeah, and Steve Cotter's got the voice technique. More on that at the course.

RM: John asks, "How are some ways an average person who goes to the gym two or three times a week, how can they incorporate kettlebells into their program and where does Gear Boy Sport fit into the picture?"

KB: I would say that's fine. Just start doing the movements. It sounds really simplistic, but it goes back to what we said earlier. Find a good trainer, learn the technique, learn the right breathing and show up. Go to the gym, practice the lifts and even if it's only a couple of times a week, you're still going to see benefit.

RM: Excellent. Next one we'll move onto. Samuel asks, "One of the benefits of kettlebell exercises is that it makes you withstand all of the stresses of your work/life that involved a lot of lifting. How many minutes of kettlebell exercises is one required in order to stay healthy and fit? Can you just do two sets of ten before you proceed to work? Or, is it not enough?"

KB: I think that's kind of a difficult question to answer. But, I think you definitely have to be in the gym. You've got to work hard to some degree, or progressively work harder over time so that your conditioning improved. Then, if your conditioning improves, your

blood chemistry is going to change, your neurology is going to change and then you're going to start to feel better.

That's something that probably won't happen after just two sets of ten. So, that's something that I think a lot of people think, well, I'm going to go into the gym and they go through the first couple of workouts and they're like, wow, I just feel like crap, this sucks. But, you've got to give it time. You've got to give your body time to acclimate, because at the end of the day, exercise is trauma, so you have to wait for your body to recovery, to adapt and to improve, and you're going to start to feel better.

MM: Yeah, and I think just on that, I think with the way a lot of things are marketed in the fitness community, I think people have the illusion that somehow they can just do ten minute workouts, like five minutes here, five minutes there, and get in great shape. What I always tell people, I go, look, you can do a ten minute workout and get in great shape. But, the kicker is, you have to be in great shape in order to do that workout because it's going to be the hardest ten minutes ever.

I mean, if you're already in great shape, yeah, you can do ten minute workouts and get a really good workout in. But, if you're someone who has a hard time walking around the block, chances are that ten minute workout is not going to be enough. You need to spend more time practicing things and working on the movements and so forth.

So, I think what people need to do is just start prioritizing a lot more. If you have a TV at home, chances are you're watching it, and chances are you're watching it for four hours, based on studies. That's what the average person watches. So, it's time to cut that in half or cut it out completely, but if you cut it in half, you just freed up two hours that you can do stuff with.

There are a lot of things that people waste their time with, YouTube, Facebook, I mean, all of us use those for our businesses, but I can say personally, I'm not on there for eight hours a day. I'm not even on there for an hour a day. So, you want to look at...you want to give your life an honest assessment and start prioritizing and working more on how can you fit more activity in, and also, how can you fit more restoration in, such as tai-chi, chi-gong, mobility, stretching, meditation.

That's another overlooked area of fitness where people that are really into training, they tend to focus on go, go, go, go, go, but they don't focus enough on actual restoration and recovery from all of that.

KB: Absolutely.

RM: Next one we'll do is, "How come bodybuilders who use barbells have a better cut and lean look than professional kettlebell pros?"

KB: I think at the end of the day it's about goals. There's a lot of people who train with kettlebells that look great, and there's a lot of people who train with kettlebells where aesthetics just isn't important to them. What's more important to them is the function. And I think with bodybuilders, that's their goal. They want to look better, they have a very specific way in how they do that. And that's great. They're doing good things. So, I think if somebody wants to be a bodybuilder, then train like a bodybuilder. If you want to have more of an athletic build, kettlebells are a good fit.

MM: Yeah, I also think that people that are really into kettlebell training, they tend to be more focused on health than aesthetics. Meaning that, they want to feel better, they want to be healthier, they want to have better cardio. And one thing, as you get older you start gravitating more towards cardio, because you start realizing that energy for life is very important. What you can do one time or three times or four times is not really contributing that much to your overall energy impact.

So, one thing about kettlebell training is that yeah, you can get bigger and stronger with kettlebells, I even have a video on it. You can use it to improve body composition, getting bigger muscles and so forth. But, the real benefits with kettlebells go to that cardiovascular, strength endurance, work capacity, and that's stuff that makes you a lot healthier overall. Getting big for the sake of being big, that really doesn't do anything for you health. I mean, having more muscle and less fat is a good thing, but that doesn't mean that you're taking up more space on the planet. That doesn't do anything to benefit you.

And also, the bodybuilding lifestyle, if you're looking at guys who are natural, even there it's not that healthy. Guys who are taking drugs, it's definitely not healthy. But, it's not about health at all, it's about how big can you get, how muscular can you get. And that has a lot of negative repercussions as well. And also, just the fact that you're eating all of the time, that ultimately leads to insulin resistance, which is type II diabetes.

When you eat a lot of calories all the time, your body's insulin receptors start becoming less and less sensitive and it takes more and more insulin in your body to get that nutrients to where it needs to go. You also are setting yourself up for nutrient spillover, where a lot of the excess is just going to be stored as fat. So, ultimately you start getting big and fat.

So, I'm not anti-bodybuilding at all, I think it's great. I think putting on size and strength, if that's your goals, that's great. But, I think the mistake people are making when they look at kettlebells and they're saying, well, how come people who use kettlebells are not big and strong like bodybuilders, and it's because it's not a

bodybuilding system. It's more of a fitness system for that work capacity and for overall energy and health.

RM: Excellent. The next one comes from Damien. He's a kettlebell instructor in New York and most of his clients are women over the age of 50. He does not have them doing snatches because of fear of them hurting their wrists and shoulders. Do you think it is safe for older women to do kettlebell snatches, or should he continue to avoid them?

KB: I mean, it's all going to come down to the client. I mean, I train a lot of clients who are around that age, and they do great. I have a lot of them who compete and they do exceptionally well. And for other people, maybe it's just not a good match, and maybe just basic swings are a better fit for that particular person.

I just think at the end of the day, it all comes down to that person, what they can handle, or what they can be conditioned to handle. And plus, part of it is, is it something that they're doing to want to do? If somebody at that age is just into kettlebells for the general conditioning benefits, doing swings is a great standalone exercise.

RM: Definitely. I see that same Damien, kind of going back on the lifestyle aspect. He said he went from a coke dealing alcoholic who dropped out of school to a straight-A student and a drug-free personal trainer after doing kettlebells. He just wanted to share that because it relates to actually training changing your life.

MM: Wow! Quite the testimonial, no doubt.

KB: Fantastic!

RM: Yeah. And last one is, is there a certain time of year that is important to begin the kettlebell skills?

KB: A certain time of year?

MM: It depends on what side of the equator you're on.

KB: I would say, no. I would say you can begin as soon as possible, regardless of season.

RM: Well, that pretty much wraps up all the question. Some of them were duplicates, from what I can tell. So, that pretty much wraps up all the questions, guys.

MM: Okay, sounds great. Thanks for hosting us, Ryan. Thanks, Ken, for doing the power talk, the interview.

KB: Oh, thanks so much, it was great.

RM: I appreciate you guys letting me host the call for you.
MM: Thanks again, Ryan.
KB: Have a great day.
MM: Take care.

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