



## WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



### **Mike Mahler and Andrew Durniat**

Hi, guys. Welcome to the call. Tonight I got another two more guests on the phone. We've got Mike Mahler and Andrew Durniat. And Andrew is a CSCS and owner of Optimal Performance Training. He is the Master Trainer for World Champion Valery Fedorenko's AKC Certification Course, an international kettlebell competitor and current American record holder for the single arm snatch, and that's 147 reps, 32 kilograms. He's also certified on the Iron Mind Captain of Crush number 3, and is an internationally recognized measure of grip strength and competes regularly in grip events throughout the USA.

And, I'm also here with Mike Mahler, and Mike is a fitness information provider based in Los Vegas. He's been a kettlebell instructor since 2002 and his currently researching the field of hormone optimization. He's working on a new book, [Live Life Aggressively! What Self Help Gurus Don't Want You to Know](#). For more info on Mike,

go to MikeMahler.com. And if you want more info on Andrew, go to DurniatStrength.com. And myself, I'm Ryan Magin with MuscleGainingExperts.com.

Mike, you can go ahead, man.

MM: Thanks for the intro Ryan. Andrew, It's great to have you on the call, and I look forward to getting some great training information today. Let's get started with how you got into kettlebell training in the first place.

AD: I got into kettlebell training while I was coaching, lacrosse coach at the college of Worcester. I was really coming off of my own lacrosse career as an All American down at Ohio Wesleyan. I was looking to just further my strength gains, find a way to get myself in better shape. I like I said, I was an All American lacrosse player. Played in the Final Four and thought I was going pretty well.

I researched the kettlebells online and was like, man, I like what they have to say, the information sounded useful. So, I finally got my hands on a couple of 28, had a big head about me at the time, and within five minutes was really just sort of put in my place and humbled by the experience and was like, wow! There's really something to this. It's not one of those infomercial gimmicks out there that just sort of looks good and flashy. So, that hooked me right off the bat, and it worked. That was what really meant a lot to me.

MM: Well, what kind of training were you doing before you got into kettlebell training?

AD: I was doing...it was very, I guess, Muscle and Fitness bodybuilding type lifting. I was going in, doing drop-set pyramid scheme, chest in Monday, back on Tuesday, legs Wednesday, shoulders Thursday, arms on Friday, and then repeat and do it again the following week, is where I really was working with all through college. I get into the kettlebells, and that definitely changed things up and has expanded from there now.

MM: So, you weren't doing a lot of Strongman type training before kettlebells? That's something that...

AD: Not at all. All that has been post kettlebells. I looked at kettlebells and sort of my gateway drug into other realms of strength training, is sort of the best way to put it I suppose.

MM: Yeah, that's really interesting, because kettlebells really got you into strength training focused workouts in general. And you're actually the world record holder in the Apollon Axle Deadlift?

AD: That is correct, yeah. I lifted 464 pounds at Chad Woodall's grip competition this past June, to set the world record. The previous world record that was long-standing of

454 pounds, I actually beat by one pound last year at US Nationals, with 455. But, it was like, man, beating it by one pound I felt was kind of cheap. And I was like, I knew I had more in me and so I had another opportunity to go after it and was able to pull through, bit time.

MM: How thick is that barbell?

AD: It's a two inch diameter barbell, but the other thing that not a lot of people realize is on the Apollon Axle, it's smooth. There is no knurling to help you out at all. It's just a two inch, hollow steel pipe that you're lifting on. Because, there are some other two inch barbells that are out there that have some knurling on it, and those are kind of nice. I mean, you can pretty well do about 500 pounds on those without much problem.

MM: I mean, people who've never used a thick barbell before, I don't have Apollon Axe, but I do have a thick barbell. It humbles you real fast. Because, I mean, if you can deadlift 400 pounds with a regular barbell, you're going to be shocked how much weaker you are, till you develop that grip strength. Even after you develop...

AD: Yeah, I've seen numerous and know of numerous 700 and 800 pound deadlifters that their legs and their whole bodies...it has that convulsing shakes and they've got 380-400 pounds max in their hands. And these are, like I said, 700 and 800 pound deadlifters. You're thinking, man, 400 pounds should be nothing to these guys. It's glued to the ground or it gets to their knees and they're just...they can't hold on. So, it's quite amazing.

MM: Well, what do you think some of the benefits are of thick barbell training for athletes in general?

AD: Definitely the thick bar is going to work the grip. Every...I think of really any sport out there that doesn't involve the use of the hands. I work with a lot of...here in the Midwest, work with a lot of football players. And all right, that first initial contact is important. But, being able to... Not every tackle in the game of football is...you're not squared-up. There's a lot of just one-arm tackles. The guy grabs a jersey or grabs an arm and rips him down. That's where the thick bar is really going to come in handy and benefit the athletes in a sport like football.

Other sports where...basketball, being able to hold onto the ball when you're going up for rebounds. You're contesting that ball with another athlete, opponent. The guy that's stronger is going to win. If your weak link is your hands and your fingers, the other guy can benefit from that.

You look at baseball, golf, two thing that connect the club to your body, are you hands. Guys wear batting gloves and put tacky on the bat for a reason, to improve their

grip. Because, if your grip is strong and that connection is strong, you have a good transfer of power from your hips through the mid section of your core of your body out through your hands. If that grip is loose, the bat vibrates, the club vibrates, you don't hit the ball as far and as hard. So, it really plays a huge part in a lot of sports, and it's often a very overlooked area.

MM: No question, just think about Aleksandr Karelin, the great Russian wrestler. I remember hearing interview with some of his opponent and one of the things they all basically stated was that when he grabbed you, it basically shut off the blood circulation in that area, because it was like a vice grip. And there was no way to get out of it. You're in this vice grip and he was able to... He also had the strength to just pick you up and chuck you. And he's doing this with guys who weigh 270 pounds, 280 pounds who have never had that happen to them before.

I forget the strength coach, but another mentioned what you basically just said about grip strength and football, where the ability to slam into an opponent, and if you can just grab that person. It's not about just that initial explosive contact.

AD: The last time I checked, there's 11 guys on a side on a football field. If my first contact doesn't knock the guy down, he's still not going to run very fast if I'm holding on and he's got to drag me down the field. You know, I guarantee the slowest guy on my team, my slowest teammate, is going to catch him. I don't care how fast or how strong he is, pulling a 230 pound body, hanging off of you, you're not running very fast. And so, it's a team sport. Yeah, you might not make that initial contact, one of your teammates is going to come pick up for you because you didn't let go.

MM: Right.

AD: The ultimate goal for football is, you win the game. I coach high school lacrosse here in town, and I tell the guys, you know what? We need to get the win. It doesn't always have to look pretty. Yeah, we want to strive for that ideal and be technically sound across the board, but there's something to be said just for going out there, scraping and mucking it up and just getting down and dirty and doing the work that needs to be done.

MM: No question. Now, with the Apollon Axle training, did you find that kettlebell training actually helped you with that goal? What motivated you to even go in that direction?

AD: Oh, definitely. The Apollon Axle and the thick bar training is very much a support type of grip where the hand is not opening or closing. It's staying in a static position around the object. That is very much identical to doing swings and snatches and cleans

with a kettlebell and most kettlebell handles are bigger than the standard barbell handles. So, that really helps emphasize that.

But, I think the biggest benefit to that support grip and my grip overall, coming from kettlebells is what I've come to term the 'dynamic eccentrics' that happen with the kettlebells, which is on the down swing of that kettlebell it's dynamically loading your grip with a greater poundage than is stamped on the side of that bell. Because, it's falling due to gravity and acceleration. Same thing on a clean, a snatch comes from overhead and a clean is coming from anywhere between mid chest and overhead level. That dynamic eccentric really forces the grip to adapt and change and become stronger.

I've noticed that when I'm snatching and doing my swings very well, not only is my thick bar on the Axle strong, but also my crushing strength with...they have the Captains of Crush grippers and other companies have the coil spring grippers. And some of these grippers if you hang a weigh off the very end of them, it's over 200 pounds of pressure to squeeze closed. There's very few guys walking the earth that are closing these grippers. That strength is also been greatly enhanced from my kettlebell work.

MM: No question. I guess you can make an argument for the reverse as well, where all the work you've done with the Apollon Axle and other grip training has carried over back to your kettlebell training.

AD: Oh, very much so. Yeah, it definitely goes both ways.

MM: Now, do you find that...some people like to just do kettlebell training. That's all they want to do. And focusing on the sport, others are just focusing on fitness. Then there are other people that want to combine kettlebell training with other implements. Now, is there a benefit to just focusing on kettlebells versus combining it with other implements, or do you think the ideal is to combine kettlebells with, let's say, barbells and maybe some other training tools?

AD: I feel that...I like the idea of being the combination training. With a lot of people, athletes and individuals I work with and myself included, training this way, there is a lot of benefits to the barbell motions. I do full back squats. Frankly, I have yet to find a kettlebell that's heavy enough to elicit the hormone response release out of my body that heavy back squats as well as the strength benefits that heavy back squats and deadlifts elicit.

I'm back squatting 500 pounds, I'm deadlifting 605. I have yet to come across those kettlebells that allow me to work that hard with bells. At the same time, I also like the pure explosiveness of Olympic lifting. If you're snatching 100 kilos overhead, you have some explosiveness in your body.

Now, at the same time, I like what the kettlebells have to offer because they have that middle range, that strength endurance aspect that really works my heart and lungs and gets my cardio going at the same time. By working with the bells, I'm not losing per se my muscle integrity that bicycling and/or jogging on a treadmill or elliptical machine would compromise. I'm able to up my cardio, make sure I have a good cardiovascular system, heart and lung capacity. But, at the same time, I'm not wasting away hard-fought muscle mass and hard-fought muscle activation by doing those super low intensity cardio activities.

MM: No question. The whole notion of just doing really low intensity work for 90 minutes to two hours to get into that fat burning zone is just ridiculous.

AD: I don't have that kind of time. Give me a ten minute snatch set, let me go. I'll be burning it out. I mean, I had a doctor that I work with, he was in the gym this evening. He's 53 years old. We got done with a six minute snatch set and he had a resting heart rate of 190. Now granted, he wasn't resting at that time, he was just concentrating on breathing and counting his pulse. But, that's where he was at after a quite intense six minutes. And you're going, man, he's 53 and he's got a pulse of 190? You're going, man, that's cookin'. I'm like, yeah, and guess what? He was working, we were cleaning those arteries out at mock velocity. So, he's not complaining about, oh, I'm not in the fat burning zone.

MM: Right, I mean, the way to basically end the argument is always to say, look at sprinters, what they look like versus marathon runners.

AD: Exactly.

MM: That pretty much ends the discussion right there.

AD: Most people want to look like the sprinter, but they train like the marathon runner. Yeah, we've got a little bit of a problem here.

MM: I think what it comes down to is the fact that sprinting is really hard. I mean, if you're really putting in a maximum effort. You can go to a field and just jog at a rapid pace and think that you're doing some sprinting. But, if you're not going full-out, 50 yards, 100 yards, whatever you're doing, and then doing several rounds, you're not really doing sprinting. You're doing what you think is sprinting. It's a lot easier to go jogging.

AD: Yeah, I'm completely with you there. The slow, long duration cardio was popular because it was frankly easy. I love the argument when people come into the gym, oh, you have it so easy and I don't. I say, hey, come back at 7 o'clock and I'll show you how easy it is to be me. You can work alongside me and find out just how easy it is to

train and be in shape and physically fit. Because, there's no magic pill, there's no magic button out there for us. You've got to work at it.

MM: Oh, yeah, no question. And on the other hand, there's no question that tri-athletes are not great athletes and that what they do is really hard. It's just that you don't want to model that exercise if your goal is improved physique composition and you don't want to model it if time constraints are an issue either. Because, you're going to have to put in a lot of time to get good at the kind of training.

AD: Yeah, very true. And they are phenomenal specimens of cardiovascular endurance. And there's a divide, also, as to where you want to be. Because, that tri-athlete is...for his ultimate endurance, he's very limited as to what he can do. He's got great endurance, but he's sort of the burning building example of, if I'm in a burning building and a tri-athlete comes in to get me, he can get to me fast, and he can sit there with me, but he's not going to be able to drag me out of the building. I'm 230 pounds. He's not taking me anywhere as a tri-athlete.

At the same time, you go to the other side, you take a 1,00 squatter from Westside Barbell, by the time he runs up the stairs, he's out of wind. Yeah, he can throw me through the wall and get me out, but by the time he gets to me, he's out of breath. So, give me the athlete that's running that 6 minute mile, squats about 500 to 600 pounds. All right, the guy's going to get to me, he's going to carry me out and he's going to go in for somebody else. And he's going to go back in for five other somebodyelse's.

That's a great... I think that's the type of fitness I think a lot of people in the population want to have. Yeah, the power lifters, they have...they're doing it for what they need to do. They're a small group of the population. I think the vast majority of people that we see as trainers are coming into the gym, they want to do a little bit of everything. They need to have that strength so when their son or daughter calls them up and says, "Hey, I want to go shoot some hoops," or, "Let's go throw the football," they can do that without breaking down and help each other out. That's where I think a lot of fitness needs to go.

MM: Those are all great points and what you're saying reminds me of something Louie Simmons said, one of the best power lifting coaches out there. He talked about how the whole notion of just picking one goal to the exclusion of others is not the way to go. He's like you need to be able to balance a variety of goals in an overall paradigm rather than make one mutually exclusive where you're just focused on getting stronger. But, that's it, that's your only goal. Because, you're going to start compromising yourself in other areas.

And also, even if you don't care about the overall health, which most people care about health, but I say you don't, you're going to get a lot better at whatever you want to do by taking a little bit from those other paradigms. Like for example, yourself, you stated that when you started competing in Strongman competitions, you weren't the strongest guy there. But, you were able to outlast a lot of people because of your strength endurance.

Let's talk a little bit more about that. Tell us about how you got into Strongman training and just how you were able to do really well in that with a lot of the training that you do.

AD: Yeah, I got into Strongman obviously it's on TV and it's a popular thing out there. It's fun. It's sort of that renegade type of training where you're out there lifting rocks and sandbags, flipping tires and so it's very raw and primal and I think it really appeals to a lot of people, especially if you're sitting at a desk all day. You need that way of letting loose.

So, really I was drawn towards the Strongman and didn't really know a whole lot. I had my...I picked a competition and said, "Hey, I'm going to go out there, throw my hat in the ring and see what happens." I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to go into the Power Fest in, I think, 2006 or 2007 at Williamsport. And I was able to do well and beat some seasoned amateur Strongmen at sort of what I would think is at their own game, since I was a newbie novice at it all. It was an open competition and it was great.

I was like, man, Strongman is...you've got to have that just brutal power. What I found was these guys get tired. And to see the conditioning...we do a loading medley and ten minutes afterwards, this guy is still hyperventilating and I'm going...I'm looking at him just worried, going somebody call a medic. This guys' going down. We stopped doing stuff ten minutes ago and he's been sitting here hyperventilating the whole time.

It was funny to listen to his reply, which was, "I need to do more cardio. I need to get on the treadmill." And I'm going, the treadmill's not going to help you! You can think treadmill all you want, but that is not going to help you in this situation. He needed to up the intensity of his workout. I'm looking at him going, all right, here, I got a kettlebell you can swing and that'll probably help you a little bit more than walking or jogging on a treadmill for this situation right now.

A lot of the motions are very similar to kettlebell lifting. Strongman is all about pick it up, put it over your head. Or, pick it up and push it. So, if you look at a kettlebell swing or two-armed swing, double cleans, jerks, very similar. Now, at the same time, you still need to do... Kettlebells again, aren't heavy enough to... Don't think you're going to be a great kettlebell lifter, is going to be a great Strongman competitor. It can help, but you can't be just mutually exclusive, one into the next. I think there's a lot that



can be learned on both sides. Do the power lifts, but then get the Strongman competitors, hey I can up your work capacity and help you last longer in a competition.

MM: Right, no doubt. I think what we're getting here, with this message being repeated in different ways is that kettlebell training in and of itself, as a stand-alone tool, is great for work capacity, great for cardio, great for strength endurance. And then, for someone who just wants to have a good amount of strength and just be fit, it's also great if someone is not planning on competing in competitions or being an athlete or anything along those lines. But, for someone who's really an athlete, you want to implement it in with other training tools rather than just focus on one thing.

It's kind of funny when people say, "What's the one thing I should focus on?" It's like, well, you don't have to make that choice, necessarily when you're an athlete. I mean, unless that's all you have. If all you have are kettlebells around. But most likely, if you're in college or you're a professional athlete or you're competing on some level, you're going to have access to other things.

AD: Correct, yeah. You've really got to look at, and especially with all the clients I deal with, it's a needs analysis. You've got to go in and ask yourself, what's your goal? With athletes, sometimes, it's okay, what limitations due to an injury are we rehabbing against and what motions can we utilize?

I have a basketball player right now, he's coming off of a severely sprained ankle. So, a lot of high impact motions of doing like power cleans and snatches is not what we can get him back into doing right now. But, I can start to activate those muscles with some swings and cleans and push-presses with a kettlebell that I wouldn't be able to do otherwise if I didn't have that tool around.

Now, once he progresses through that, the kettlebell's going to move to the back burner at the end of his routine. And yeah, the heavier power cleans and box jumps are going to come more to the forefront, because he does need that explosive power. But, it's the same thing with a football player, I'd do the same thing.

So, you look at where the athlete or the individual is at now, and go okay, what's the best way to move him forward. And sometimes, yeah, the kettlebells are going to take a bigger role. As they advance through, maybe they take a little bit more of a backseat role. But, usually they're always there in the program at some point in time.

MM: Yeah, no question. Now, what do you think are some of the shortcomings? Let's say someone...there's different debates on how to use a kettlebell. We hear this all the time. You and I talk about this all the time where some people feel that kettlebells should only be used for strength endurance, the kettlebell sport being the echelon of that, while others feel that it can be used more for general fitness and strength and

strength training and physique competition improvements and whatnot. What's your take on the whole thing and what do you feel are the shortcomings of, especially if someone just wants to compete in kettlebell sport? What are some of the shortcomings of just doing that and how would you balance some of those shortcomings?

AD: I think one, the kettlebell is a vastly versatile tool and it's going to... For some competing, I know the kettlebell sport is very popular. I compete it in myself and love it, obviously. I've had quite a bit of success with it.

But initially, I think when you come to kettlebells, and any kettlebell instructor should initially start you with the slower "bodybuilding" type motions of presses, rows and those what would be termed "beginner" exercises to build up a baseline of fitness.

Now, at the same time, I could take some professional bodybuilders, I have a few coming in in a couple of weeks that want to integrate the kettlebells into what they're doing as bodybuilders and figure models. We're going to continue to do some of those slow, controlled motions with them, really isolating certain motions, certain muscles and movement patterns. But, just by the nature of the way the bell hangs, it's going to change up the dynamic compared to a dumbbell, just in the shape of the kettlebell and how they can hold it, whether it be bottoms-up, hold it from the bottom, or rowing just strictly from the handle. Same with the presses, lateral raises, just the physics of it all change greatly. So, they're going to get a great effect by implementing the kettlebell in that way for their specific needs and goals there.

Now, once those baseline movements have been mastered and perfected, now we can look into, okay, does this individual want to get into the sport of kettlebell lifting? Now, we get a little bit more ballistic motion involved, same thing with my athletes. Most sports these days, they're fast-paced. It's about speed. So, we're going to start to integrate the kettlebells with a little bit more ballistic motions to better facilitate what their needs are over say, like I said, the fitness model/bodybuilder who is going for that physique and appearance of the body.

When you get to the kettlebell sport, yeah, the exercises we're choosing for kettlebell sport are quite finite. You're looking at three or four exercises at most, compared to a bodybuilder that may use ten exercises just for the shoulders alone, let alone the rest of the body.

So, with the kettlebell sport only using a few exercises, there are some gaps left in the overall conditioning and shape of the body. Namely, there's no deep knee bending, squatting motion with kettlebell sport. I know myself, if I see any deep squatting motion, the quads get overworked. I'm not getting as much flexibility and mobility in those areas. So, I really have to concentrate on making sure I squat at the

very minimum on a maintenance mode using only 50-60% as a maintenance lift when I'm working heavy jerks and snatches with kettlebell sport.

So, there are some definite limitations, and you've got to be careful of that. Because, I like the longevity that is with kettlebell lifting, but I think with the kettlebell sport, you've got to be careful and make sure you do have a well-balanced out program. I've talked to many masters and senior lifters from overseas, and yeah, they do the kettlebell sport well into their 60's and 70's. But, you talk to them and they also have a lot of just good overall fitness lifting that they do along with it, full deep knee bends and some swimming and cycling to round it all out for them in their older age.

MM: Yeah, that was basically going to be my next question, because that makes perfect sense. Basically, if you're competing for the sport, you don't want to just focus on the two lifts you're competing in. I mean, obviously you need to spend a lot of time doing those to get good at it, but you want to augment your program with other exercises for balance.

AD: Exactly. I mean, if you were to break it down percentage wise, I'd say you're probably going to spend – if you're doing kettlebell sport – you're looking at probably 75% of your time is going to be with those kettlebell sport lifts. And 25% is going to be the “auxiliary” lifts/health lifts, as they've been known as, doing squats and deadlifts and other joint mobility exercises. It's going to be a smaller percentage of your overall time. But, the 75 to 80, 85% of your time is going to be doing the sport lifts. But, if you're not competing for kettlebell sport, there's no need to make it that great of percentage. You can get a little bit better balance and go from there.

MM: Yeah, definitely. Now, do you think it would make sense to do any kind of high rep barbell work such as high rep cleans with the barbell or high rep clean and presses as a way to improve kettlebell high rep work?

AD: I don't see the carryover with the barbell being...with high rep work. Now, I will do... What I have found is I find that doing traditional Olympic sort of sets and reps of twos and threes help with my explosiveness and my speed with the kettlebell sport lifts of the jerks, namely. Because, I came to the kettlebell sport with fairly strong shoulders where I'm very capable of pressing for higher reps with 32 kilogram bells. What I needed to do to increase my numbers in kettlebell sport was to be more efficient with the use of my legs, my full body and my speed, getting underneath the bells and driving them up.

What I've found is by doing clean and jerks with a barbell where the weight was heavy enough and I was forced to explode the muscle memory then transferred back over to my kettlebell sport, the next thing you know my jerks were much more crisp with the kettlebells, coming from the Olympic barbell training. It definitely helped out there.

MM: Yeah, no doubt. One thing with kettlebell training, with the sport, doing high rep sets or long duration sets, ten minutes, is you develop tremendous structural integrity. That's one of the things you've talked about quite a bit. Do you feel that that structural integrity would benefit somebody who, let's say, is on a bodybuilding program and if yes, why and how would that help out?

AD: Yeah, I think that structural integrity will definitely help out, and especially on the bodybuilding program. Because, that structural integrity is... I think that's a great word. I think we should use that more often than just core training. Let's change it to structural integrity training. Because, with that...your main structure of your core, you're able to handle greater loads. If you're able to handle greater load, we can stimulate the muscle fibers to a greater extent before your core breaks down. When your core breaks down, injury...if you're back squatting and your core breaks down, guess what? You've got a problem with a lot of weight on your back.

So, if that structural integrity is sound, that bodybuilder/figure model can now perform more squats, lunges, step-ups, what have you, to better activate and further activate the leg muscles and same thing goes for shoulder pressing, bench pressing. That core structural integrity breaks down, your training session is over.

Whereas, I think, the kettlebell training can really help build-up that muscle mass and that tendon/ligament strength that can just up your body's ability to handle higher training volume, which for some, could definitely be a benefit.

MM: Yeah, no doubt. I mean, if you want to get bigger and stronger, you have to do a lot of high volume training with relatively short breaks. And if you're not fit, or have good work capacity, you're not going to be able to do that. You may be able to do a couple of sets, but then your strength just drops off and you're using 50% less than you're starting weight on your 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> set. You're not really getting the most values as if you could maintain that for a much longer time period.

AD: Not at all, and you're not going to...yeah, you may be getting some lactic acid in the muscles, but you're not activating those muscle fibers. If those muscle fibers aren't being activated, they're not growing. It's about muscle activation. That's all the bodybuilder and figure models care about. They want those muscles pumped, and they want them activated to grow and so they can get to the shape that they would like them to be.

If your body's not capable of activating those muscle fibers, man, you can curl that five pound weight all you want, that arm is not going to grow. You need to be able to pick up and handle the heavier weights to get that muscle to grow.

MM: Right, exactly. Now, with the kettlebell sport, do you think there would be some level of muscle loss if you only focus on ten minute sets, for example, that's all you ever do? Or, do you think that if you're using a heavy enough weight, such as maybe a 53 for some men, maybe a 70 pound kettlebell for other men, they're going to be able to maintain some muscle tissue or even build some. What are your thoughts on that?

AD: Well, I think definitely if you're going to be using just ten minute sets, you're definitely going to be losing some muscle mass. Because, the repetitions and the endurance needed to get to that length is tremendous. Now, if in your training you're using some shorter sprint sets and things like that, yes, I think some muscle mass can be maintained. But, again, the areas that the kettlebell sports really are going to activate is going to be the back and the shoulders and in through the hips. So, yeah, muscle mass can be gained in those areas.

If you're looking at where you're going to lose muscle mass, just myself included, my legs will get smaller if I'm not doing the other full lifts, chest muscles, pectorals, are not going to be activated as much. So, yes, muscle mass is going to be gained along the back and spinal erectors and the shoulders, but it's going to be lost in a lot of other areas with just that kettlebell sport protocol.

MM: Yeah, no question. I think you can also get so efficient that there isn't a training effect in terms of body composition improvements, where you're just...

AD: Oh, very much so.

MM: It's almost as if the harder it is, the more it's going to have an effect on your body. And then once you get really good at it, to the point where you know how to really pace it and keep your heart rate low...

AD: Weight lifting, power lifting and the sports of competing, I guess, at their essence is kind of counterproductive, because you're trying to elicit a growth and a physical change in the organism of your body. But at the same time, your mind is trying to make you more efficient at that exercise, which makes it less a response on the organism as a whole. So, yeah, the weights and/or pacing that you use in kettlebell sport does not improve any, yeah, you will shut down your body's adaptation response completely just out of efficiency.

So, I guess as a whole, power lifters are probably going to have the best techniques squatting and deadlifting, which in a sense would be counterproductive to strength gains if they didn't add more weight to the bar. In a sense it's the same thing with kettlebell lifters. If the weight you're using does not get heavier, you're being counterproductive to strength and fitness goals in a sense. So, it's kind of nice that we

can move up in weight. So, that is definitely a concern to have and be wary of when you're training.

MM: Oh, yeah, no question. It's kind of like when I was doing some body weight training a long time ago, when you pick an exercise that's relatively difficult, you definitely notice the difference in your upper body, your shoulders start getting bigger, for example, from doing something like dive-bomber pushups, if you're not good at it. But, when you get to a point where you're doing hundreds of it, you get to a point where you can do 500 in a row, you're actually in the reverse. Now your body's actually getting smaller because your body's looking for any way to make that goal easier, especially if you're doing it often.

So, it's almost...with the ten minute sets, your body is going to start going, well, I can't make the weight lighter, but I can make the arms lighter by getting rid of some of that unnecessary muscle tissue on the triceps and the biceps. We don't need that to be there. And let's get rid of the lats and let's get rid of this so we have a tighter grip.

I'm just saying, when you take it to an extreme. I'm not saying that everybody who competes loses mass, I'm just saying that that's one direction where it can go if that's all you're doing.

AD: Yep. Very true.

MM: Now, you made some great points about how you incorporate kettlebells in with some of the fitness competitors and some of the different bodybuilding type athletes. You actually just have them do some kettlebell exercises that they would normally do with dumbbells, make perfect sense, renegade rows, pressing and whatnot.

Now, what about if you're training a fitness competitor, for example? What about taking away all of their traditional forms of cardio, such as walking on a treadmill and just doing the light stuff and just replacing that with some of the kettlebell sport type movements where you're doing timed sets, maybe sprint sets some days, maybe ten minute sets other days? Do you think that a bodybuilder, for example, could just replace all of their cardio that they're normally doing with kettlebell style cardio?

AD: I don't think they're going to replace it entirely. But, I definitely like integrating the kettlebells in there, just because I've seen bodybuilders come in, they're grinding away at the cardio, just cutting, cutting, trying to cut body fat and cut water weight out of their system. I'm like, all right, again, time if of the essence. We can sit here and go, all right, let's integrate these speed sets because when they're sitting on that treadmill, they're cutting weight and that's fine, because sometimes you've got to do that as a recovery method. And that low intensity helps for recovery, so it's not entirely bad to do that.

But, at the same time, I'm going, man, while they're cutting that water weight and cutting body fat, they're cutting a lot of muscle mass. By using the sprint sets and the longer kettlebell sets, I think they're going to preserve some of that muscle mass, especially in through hips, back and shoulders, which are some problem areas for a lot of figure models and bodybuilder. Man, let's do some high rep snatch sets, some clean and jerks and let's go for it and get that heart rate up, let's burn the body fat off, preserve the muscle mass and get you cut down a little bit.

Yeah, all right, the day after doing those high rep sets, all right, hop on the treadmill and walk for a half hour as a recovery day. And then, we'll get right back into doing the higher rep and/or speed sets of interval training and things like that that cuts you down, incorporate with their diet. Man, you want to talk about some great responses? Unfortunately I think right now sometimes what we get is...bodybuilders, we've been cutting weight like this for 50 years. This is what's been tried and true. This is what we know and they're a little hesitant to break outside of that mold.

I tell you, I get a couple of them and they go through it with the interval kettlebell work, they're loving it. And they don't feel like they're just wasting away to nothing while they're cutting weight.

MM: Yeah, sounds like you've figured out a great way to just implement that in there and just get the best of both worlds.

Let's go through a couple of different training programs. People always want to know how to design programs for different things. So, maybe you can provide a couple of different examples for various goals. Let's talk about fat loss. What would be a sample of fat loss program where you combine kettlebells with other training tools, barbells and whatnot.

AD: Yep. What I'm going to do with the fat loss individuals that are coming in is we're going to start off, I love doing squats and keeping that mobility with those individuals and structural integrity. So, usually we'll start the day off getting the body warmed-up with some mobility movements of Turkish get-ups, usually two to three sets, probably five on each arm, getting up off the ground. Then, we're going to get into our bigger motions of the day, either squatting, benching, just to get the hormones in the right position to burn body fat. I think that's an often overlooked aspect of weight loss.

MM: Oh, yeah, you're ramping up those growth hormone levels with those...

AD: Ramp the growth hormones.

MM: Really compound exercises, right?

AD:           Yep, prime the system for fat burning. And with those, I don't have to get too crazy. I like the load to be decently heavy, but not overbearing, which again, usually with the fat loss community I'm working with little less experienced lifters. And so, I'm looking at three to four sets of eight to ten repetitions on either the squat, deadlift or the bench press to get the hormone level in the area that I like.

Once I have that, now that I've got the body primed with the right hormones, then yeah, we're going to get into some kettlebell work. Some of my favorites are going with six minute sets. All these individuals are working with a single individual bell, initially. And we're switching arms every minute.

Most people, at least starting off, the ability to go longer than a minute on each arm is very difficult at first. And so, I don't ask them to do that. I say, all right, our goal is one minute at a time. You get to switch arms after the minute. Snatches, we get them going between 18, 20, 22 reps a minute for six minutes, switching arms every minute with a load that's correct for that individual.

They'll get a two minute rest break, six minutes again. Again, either doing snatches, that 18-22 reps a minute, or if need be, if their grip is starting to fatigue from doing the snatches, which happens often, I'll drop it down and we'll do clean and jerks. But, we're still able to maintain a good, quick, brisk paced clean and jerk. You're looking at 10 to 12 reps a minute. Sometimes they're not always doing clean and jerks, it's more of a clean and press with the less experienced individuals. That's perfectly fine.

With the fat loss individuals, I want them performing work and doing work at a higher than comfortable pace for them, where that six minutes... Like I said, I had a physician in earlier today, he's beating at 190 beats a minute at the end of that six minute set. He's shredding some fat off his body doing that.

We'll do upwards of three, six minute sets in an half hour group session with those kettlebells. It's a very favorite way of mine to shred some body fat off of people.

MM:           Yeah, that's all great stuff. What would you recommend to somebody where kettlebells are the only thing they have to train with? And maybe they have a couple of different sizes, maybe they only have one bell, but that's it. Obviously they can do body weight training, too. But, not everyone's a member of a gym and a lot of people got into kettlebell training just because they liked the idea of just maybe having a couple of bells at home as basically their home gym.

AD:           Yep. The best things to do, I mean, a former roommate of mine, every day before work he's get up, go downstairs, he'd do 150 swings and hop in the shower. Five minutes a day, basically. He started to improve his fitness that way.



Kettlebells are great. They're the ultimate circuit training tool out there, because it's just that you have one or two at home. You can do everything. For weight loss, yeah, put it in a circuit training fashion. Find five exercises, let's just say, all right, I'm going to do squats. If you're starting off the program, you start with body weight squats. You do a set of ten, then you move over, you do ten pushups, ten sit-ups, ten rows on each arm with your kettlebell and you do ten swings on each arm with the kettlebell. There's five exercises, all that you can do in your living room. You rotate around those, do each one of those five times around, time yourself, see how fast you can do it.

You start to advance, you go, man, I can't really take off any time. All right, your squats, you pick up the kettlebell, you're still doing full squats. You've now added the resistance of your kettlebell. Now, you're still doing the sets of ten. Same thing. You can up your crunches or your sit-ups on the floor. You can change that exercise up as needed. Pushups become too easy, all right, change the pushups to overhead shoulder presses with the kettlebell. Your shoulder girdle probably is starting to strengthen-up from doing the swings and the rows and the pushups as it is. That kettlebell is now probably capable of being pressed overhead.

If you need to change it up again, go with a one arm overhead squat with the kettlebell. Go with the press with the kettlebell, change this up the way you're using the press into a more challenging exercise, again, to elicit the response out of your body. This is just taking those five exercises and repeating them almost indefinitely, but every time we go through the program, as we get better, we improve it to challenge the body again to force the body to adapt and change.

Training at its simplest, I like to put it and my mom always jokes with me is, it's adapt or die. Your body either adapts to the stimulus or you're going to perish. So, we hope your body adapts to it and you get a better being and evolution of your being as opposed to perishing.

MM: Right, and the goal of training of course is to build you up and increase your strength, your fitness, your longevity, not beat you down where now you basically just have to sleep all the time or you have to rest-up on the weekends just to recover from your workouts. It's not enhancing your life, it's taking away energy from your life.

AD: Yep, and so we start at a manageable level. Like I said, some swings and one arm rows, for some people, is that manageable level. Once you become proficient at that, then we can add in the snatches and the clean and presses, bottoms-up clean and press. You can go from a regular row to a renegade row. Each one is a step along the route of fitness and overall strength gains. But, you start at the basics and then you advance it. All right, you get proficient at that, you advance it again. You keep doing

that, I guarantee you're going to see some tremendous changes in your body for the positive.

MM: Oh, yeah, no question. It's basically as simple as just being creative, focusing on basic movements, finding creative ways to increase the intensity, the difficulty of different exercises and just having a good time training and enjoying the whole process, not burning yourself out.

You work with a lot of high level athletes and you're working with college athletes, high school athletes, you've worked with a variety of people in the past. Now, you're really good at getting people on really solid programs where you can modulate the intensity so they're not burning out. Is there anything you do with your clients for restoration? Any advice you give them, any recovery techniques that you've found that have worked pretty well?

AD: Nutrition is vitally important. It is something that I know at first when I got into it, I didn't understand just how important nutrition was to the overall standing and obviously with someone like yourself, Mike, your knowledge and research into the matter is deeper than most I know out there. So, I always love reading your stuff, because it's definitely spot-on.

But, that is the biggest one that I promote. And it's the nutrition around your workouts that I've found to be very vital, especially for myself. One thing especially a lot of high school guys come in and want that post-workout protein shake. I've really noticed, myself included is, drink a protein shake an hour before your workout, do your workout and find out just how productive you really can be. It's amazing. You have that protein shake an hour, hour and a half before, primes your system, the recovery starts before you start breaking your muscles down. Have that protein in your body to be utilized right away, and man, my workouts are tremendous, my recovery's faster across the board. It's phenomenal. So, that's one that I've really started hampering on across the board.

And then, I also do a lot of dynamic joint mobility motions on the off days. With high school guys, sometimes yeah, static stretching is the way to go because it's an easy enough thing and they know what they're doing. They can't mess themselves up. And when they're not training on an off day, sometimes, especially for high school/college athletes that are doing more than...all they like to do is sit around and twiddle their thumbs playing X-Box. If I can get them to do some stretching on an off day, sometimes that's a feat in itself.

MM: No question. All good advice. Now, let's talk a little bit about your training and we'll let you go. We could definitely keep you on for a couple more hours with all the

great advice you're putting out there. But, we'll save some of that for our course we're doing next month. We'll talk a little bit about that at the end of the call, too.

But, let's talk about your own training. When you get to a point where you're at, where you're a really high level athlete and coach, how much of a strength program design do you follow, or how much of it is instinctive? In other words, would you say that your training is more instinctive at this point where you basically make changes as you go along, maybe you make changes right on the spot in a workout. Or, do you tend to design programs for yourself like you would a client and try to stick to those guidelines?

AD: I will design them with some strict guidelines, but at the same time, I think the ultimate training knowledge is learning to know your body quite well. What I've found, and I think a lot of other trainers have found throughout the years is, after about three hard work weeks of just really getting after it, steady build-up training, your body needs a little bit of a break. I guess what I should say is, you can train your butt off for about five weeks, and your body's going to force you to take a break.

Whereas, if I train my butt off and just train hard for three weeks, take a break on the fourth, and then ramp it back up again, I can train pretty much all year round like that without my body really screaming at me, telling me, "Hey, take it easy." That's probably the most valuable thing I've found. Because, when I was in high school I felt like I could just go all day, I didn't need a break. But then, all of a sudden, nagging injuries would show up or all of a sudden I would just be tired for a week. That was my body's way of telling me, "You went too far."

Whereas now, yeah, I'm pretty structured. Every fourth week, Andrew's taking a lesser percentage in his workouts. Usually, that's 50-60% of my max is the most I'm going to work with. With kettlebell sport, it's kind of interesting because there's not strict percentages that people have used for volume, and I'm starting to really track mine and put together some good percentages to be utilized volume wise an intensity for kettlebell sports. I'm really anxious to have some of that data sort of compiled and put together here pretty shortly, which ought to be very interesting.

So, my training is on that strict scale, but then there are some days where it's just not there. I have a bare minimum that I have set forth for my day. Once I get through that, I can skip the rest of my day if I'm having an off day. But then, at the same time, I have that sort of extra goodie bag that's left there. Okay, hey, if I get through my minimum and I'm still feeling good, here's some extra exercises that I will add into my day.

So, there is that intuitive side to it as well, that doesn't always occur with my athletes. But, the longer I've worked with my athletes I get a good sense of when they

walk in the door, who's going to have a good day and who's not. If you're having a good day, you get the extra stuff. If you're having a bad day, we get through the minimum and I say, all right, let's do some stretching, let's get out of here, because your mind and your brain and your body is just not with it today.

So, it is a bit of both. I think some of the best coaches out there and strength trainers have that intuitive sense with their clients. But, at the same time, they have a good set plan in place and I think a lot of them say, yeah, there's the nonnegotiable exercises and then from there, we sort of play it by ear after that.

MM: Right, exactly. That's all really good advice. One thing I've found with my online clients is, I would develop programs that I thought were basically a good basic programs to get them going in the first week, and what would happen is it would be too difficult for them. But, they wouldn't tell me that until the end of the week. So, I get these training journals and someone says, "Okay, I made it through the first day's workout, but I puked two times, but I didn't want to give up. So, I kept going."

If you're training instinctively, you're not going to keep going when you're about to puke, and you're certainly not going to keep going after you have. And you're not going to do that often. So, an example of following a plan too closely is just that, right there, where you definitely need to make some modifications.

So, I've actually aired on the side now where I make it almost a little bit too easy, just to make sure... If it's too easy, we can always ramp it up, but what you don't want to do is it's too hard and now the person's wiped out from the first week and it's going to take them a week to recovery from that.

AD: Or worse, injured.

MM: Or, some injury occurs.

AD: Yeah, I mean, it's not good. So, I always err on the side of go too easy, and sometimes what you find is the easy...beware the easy workout, because, the easy, when done diligently, could be quite hard.

MM: Sure.

AD: I've posted some workouts on my training blog where I've had some people comment in going, you know, that looks easy, tell me what it was really like. I was going, no. I was like, it may only be two lines of work that you read, but don't confuse short with a smell the roses type of day. That was a lot of work done and a lot of pain and suffering to get through that.

And then, there's other protocols where there is a lot of volume done, but the volume goes up, the intensity is usually down. Those aren't too bad of days. Yeah, you're in there for a while doing a bunch of stuff, but man, the intensity was nothing.

MM: Right, exactly. That's a good point. Sometimes I'll do high volume on deadlift, eight sets of three, and people respond going, "Wow! Looks like a really intense workout." Where in reality, it wasn't really that intense at all. You're taking short breaks in between each set and by the end of the workout you feel refreshed and ready to go. You're not wiped out.

Other times I'll do a two mile walk with 100 pound vest on and people underestimate the difficulty of that and go, "Well, what's the point of that or what's the benefit?" I go, "Do it one time and you'll never ask me that question again."

AD: Yeah, you'll never ask again. Yep.

MM: Those workouts are way harder than some high volume with relatively high intensity. So, there's no question. Simple can be very deceptive. Going for a two mile walk with some weight on doesn't really sound like anything that will be that difficult because it's not complicated. But, it's definitely not easy. You've never worked into that before.

Well, this has been an excellent call, incredible information. Just to reiterate your website, Andrew, it's DurniatStrength.com. Andrew has a lot of great information. He's got a bunch of articles on there. He's got some really inspiring clips of him training on YouTube, doing some of the stuff that we talked about on the call, the Apollon Axle deadlift and some incredible kettlebell feats of strength.

Also, Andrew's going to be one of the main instructors at a course we're doing together next month in Los Angeles. It's going to be October 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>. It's called Kettlebell Training in the Age of Quarrel. One of the goals of the course is to just show the variety of different ways you can use the kettlebell for a lot of different goals successfully, kind of cut through a lot of the dogma and a lot of the debates on what's the one way it should be used. There's a variety of ways it can be used for different benefits and it all boils down to what your goals are.

So, we can show you a variety of effective ways to implement the kettlebell into your training program, just like Andrew does with his clients, or to focus on more kettlebell focused programs for a variety of different goals. We're going to go way beyond just kettlebell training. It's more of a health and fitness seminar where I'm going to be talking about hormone optimization for athletic performance in overall health.

Steve Cotter's doing a body weight training session, animal based body weight movements. We have Kim Blackburn doing agility training. Jason Dolby doing some Indian club training for taking your joint mobility to the next level. That's one of those important things for restoration. And then Andrew's going to talk more at the course in more detail than we had time today, about how to again put together a successful training program for a variety of goals. And if you're a trainer, how to implement kettlebells successfully with other training tools so your clients get the most bang for their buck.

So, again, thanks a lot, Andrew, great information.

AD: You're welcome. Thank you.

MM: And we'll talk to you soon.

AD: Excellent.

MM: Take care everyone. Bye.

RM: All right, thanks a lot, see you later.

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