

Tommy Wood

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Mike T Nelson, Dr Tommy Wood



Dr. Mike T Nelson 00:00

Hey, welcome back to the flex Diane podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mike T. Nelson. flex the podcast is if you're interested in better performance, body composition, all without destroying your health. Today in the program, I've got my good friend, Dr. Dr. Tommy wood. He is the CSO, which we often joke is the chief snake officer at the bro Research Center. He is also a very legit MD, and did the full MD route, and then went back afterwards and did a PhD. So he is a researcher looking at neurology and different potential brain injury mechanisms. And I wanted to get him on the show today actually do give his feedback on his first ever strongman competition that he did. So I've been training, Tommy online now for over nine months, he came to me and said he wanted to do his first strongman competition. So I said, Great. And we go through a whole bunch of things that even if your goal is not to do a strongman competition, I think just the breakdown of how to look at programming will be a useful discussion for you. And then hopefully, we will encourage you to do some type of competition. Whether that's a grip sport, or a rowing event, or CrossFit or strongman or powerlifting, Olympic lifting, whatever, I don't really care. I think it is very useful, at least to do a couple times in your life to decide if you like it or not. But I think most people will make a lot more progress by putting their stamp in the mail, putting your name on the docket and having to show up and perform in front of a bunch of people on a random day. If that kind of scares you, then that's probably all the more reason to do it. So Tommy and I talk about what are some of the aerobic adaptations for in his particular event strong man? How do you program or Rubik and strength training at the same time I in the same week, we discuss a

grip strength, which I think is an underappreciated aspect of lifting, even if you are not going to compete in crazy grip contests. My wife and I both competed in Finland for grip sport two years ago, which was super fun. Tommy went and increased his double overhand deadlift. So try this out yourself. You can use a one inch bar, so standard bar, and then instead of using the mixed grip or straps, you can use chalk and have both of your palms down and see what your max is, in this case is double overhand Max was well below his mixed grip or straps max. And after nine months, he increased that by over 100 pounds. So when we first tested his double overhand deadlift was around 300 to 95. Nine months later, he was doing double overhand 405. We also picked up an axle. So an axle is at a bar that's two inches thick, and doesn't rotate. So it's definitely more of a challenge to your grip. And he also added almost 100 pounds to his double overhand axle lift to pro tip, if you don't have X access to an axle, you can get like the blue fat grips for probably like 30 bucks through Amazon. Super, super useful for grip. If you're a female or someone has very small hands, the black fat grips may be a little bit better. The blue flat grips are gonna be a little bit over two inches. The black ones I think are like 1.6 somewhere around there. So those are super useful objects, why they should be somewhat in your programming. And Tommy's case that was very specific to what he was doing. And then also we go into program design, how do we design all these things? And it was great to get Tommy's feedback on all of this big thanks to him for sharing all of the insights and how it was to go through the program. So wanted to do this deep dive into programming, getting ready for a competition, which I think you will enjoy. So check out this interview with Dr. Dr. Tommy wood. Hey, what's going on? Welcome back to the flex diet podcast and I've got my good buddy Dr. Darren Tommy wood is back on the program today. And we're going to talk about just some lessons learned and maybe a little bit in the programming and you know why you maybe you should compete and just do a local event Tommy did is, I think is your first strong man local event just a few weeks ago, correct?

D Dr Tommy Wood 05:20

Yeah. Yeah, it was, it was a lot of fun. And I'm happy to be here to talk about it.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 05:26

Nice. And for people maybe living under a rock or having heard or other podcasts here with their buddy, Dr. Ben house, give us the brief little rundown on yourself.

D Dr Tommy Wood 05:36

Yeah, sure. So I'm a faculty at the University of Washington in, in pediatrics, and

neuroscience. I, alongside my neuroscience research and research, looking at brain injury, and babies, spent a lot of time working with various athletes, mainly from a sort of blood work, some nutrition, other lifestyle aspects of performance that I still do a little bit on the side. So I've some like formal academic work, and then then some other work with athletes I've been doing for the last decade or so.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 06:08

So and you're one of those people who did the MD PhD route, and you did the ultra long route of doing MD medical school route, and then later decided to go back and do a full PhD.

D Dr Tommy Wood 06:22

Yeah, I did. I did it. I did it the long way round. md PhD combined programs aren't particularly common in Europe that you can get them in some places. But yeah, I did one did one and then the other. So then, obviously, I think even though it took longer, I got the best of both got the best of both worlds, even though I spent more than a decade in

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 06:42

higher education. So no matter what somebody says, you can still say you're a real doctor.

D Dr Tommy Wood 06:47

Yes.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 06:52

It's like a rather john said, technically,

D Dr Tommy Wood 06:54

I will say that. The medical doctor, a medical doctor is an honorary doctorate. The history of the medical doctorate in the UK, particularly when it first came about, it was an honorary doctorate, whereas a PhD is the true original doctorate. Right? Yeah. Because Dr. Ray, it comes from the Latin for to teach, and PhDs generally, were teachers, your lecturers in universities. So if anybody says that you with a PhD or not a real doctor, that's actually the opposite. It's incorrect. It's an honorary doctorate, or at least the history of the medical doctorate. It was an honorary doctorate.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 07:31

Nice, and I can torture all my MD friends. Yeah. Like years ago, I was at a seminar in Ohio, and my assistant had booked the hotel. And so I get there, I check in and give her my name. And she's like, I can't find your name. So go, here it is. Oh, how are you? Dr. Nelson? I'm fine. She's like, oh, what are you a doctor in? Nice. Oh, I just finished a PhD in exercise physiology. She's like, Oh, so you don't cut people up? I said, No, no, I'm not a surgeon, like, oh, and so do the checking thing. And then she gives me my key. And she goes, Oh, here's your key, Mr. Nelson. My only surgeons can be doctors in our world.

D Dr Tommy Wood 08:19

Class. Yeah, I've heard a story of the opposite. was actually from, from my dad, and he's he was lived in the US was born the US. And he, he lives in the US in the late 70s and early 80s. And apparently, at one point, he was stopped for speeding. And then you know, hand over the license and that kind of stuff. And then it says on his licenses, Doctor, Doctor word, and then the police officer says I you know, are you even a rush to get to the hospital? Doctor? And he's a geologist. Obviously not. And he was like, Oh, no, I'm not that kind of doctor. And then the police officer says, Well, I'm sure you're very important anyway, and then just gives him his license. And let's go. Oh, nice. Yeah, I don't think that would happen anymore. But back in the day, yeah.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 09:02

And the rocks will probably wait for him. slowly progressing. Maybe I'm biased towards geologists. But no,

D Dr Tommy Wood 09:09

I don't think there's really anything. Well, at least in my dad's field, there's no such thing as a geological emergency, I guess, you know, earthquakes and things like that. Probably. Yeah.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 09:22

Cool. Yeah. So what made you want to do competition? Obviously, you've been lifting for many years. What gave you the bug to try to do a local competition?

D Dr Tommy Wood 09:35

Yeah, that's a good question. I. So this is the first time I competed in in strongman. And it's something that I've been fascinated by since I was a kid. So every Christmas well, strongest man comes on in the UK. And this obviously happened several months earlier, but it's, you know, back in the early 90s, or early, late 90s, early 2000s. That whole time period. You know, it was on social media, so you can follow on Instagram like Yeah, can nowadays, sort of. And so the and the especially during, during my lifetime as a kid, first young Paul sygma son was a multiple time world. Well, straw, well, Strongest Man champion. He's Icelandic, I'm half Icelandic. And then Magnus, Magnusson also has multiple time. Well, Strongest Man. So this this was like, deeply tied into, you know what it is to be Icelandic at least to me because it was like living in the UK. But then these like famous Icelanders would come on and, and be everybody well, Strongest Man. So that was part of why I really, I really enjoyed it. So it's just always been something that I've been fascinated by I've always followed. And then, you know, more recently, I'd seen that there were a few, you know, local strongman competitions that were run by some local gyms that was sort of pop up occasionally. And I thought, you know, I'd like to give, like, you know, give it give a go at some of that. I also, like the fact that I get to be a lightweight in strongman, you know, anytime you can be caught in a lightweight way. 25 pounds, you know, I think that that, yeah, that's, that's kind of nice. So, so yeah, I'd kind of is basically a year ago, now, we started talking about the possibility of doing that. And I targeted that particular competition that I did Viking Fest, I sort of targets that it'd be, you know, sort of nine to 12 months out from from when we started working on that. And that was it. And, and, you know, one of the main things one of the reasons why I started working with you particularly is because strong man, to the big components are shoulder and pressing strength and grip strength, both of which, historically, I have been terrible at and, you know, as, you know, having never really had to focus on something for competition, because I've never really worked, competed in something that required those those skills or strengths. And never really worried about it, you know, always use straps for anything heavy, you know, just did the sort of pressing motions or some, you know, lat raises or whatever with the dumbbells for for some shoulder work in a bodybuilding site, but but not sort of really developing that there's kind of pressing skills and strength. So that was where your expertise ended up really, really benefiting me, made a big difference. But then that was also one of the reasons or the main reasons why we were working together.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 12:28

Yeah, cool. And I'm a side note, do you think there's so many successful strongman competitors from Iceland, I've been there once. And it was fascinating. It's just everything from the scenery of being green, black and blue, almost all at the same time, to just almost reminded me more of, like, grip strength is huge, like in Finland, like there appears to be, like, just a whole culture and the stones and just there's much more of a rich, maybe

history, and maybe people kind of grow up as kids seeing that more often. And it's, you know, astronomers become a little bit more popular in the US now. But back, you know, 10 1520 years ago, it wasn't nearly as popular as what it is now. It just seems like there's more history there, I guess around it.

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Dr Tommy Wood 13:21

Yeah, I think particularly stone lifting. Like in Scotland, and in Catalonia, surprisingly, I think. Yes, there's real stone lifting is like really baked into the Nordic culture. And I think rogue did a really nice dawn theories they did, they did three, three documentaries on studying, I think one in each of those areas. And the one in ice, one lesson was called footstep good. Which means for for fully strong. And the sort of historically, apparently, obviously, first, the Vikings and then later, sort of the native Icelanders, a lot of their economy was based on fishing. And so there was, you know, there were these stones, where you would sort of test yourself out and based on which stones you could lift that would dictate the share you got from the proceeds of fishing like where you are, where in the fit in the in the fishing hierarchy, I didn't realize was tied

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 14:22

to your direct income. That's fascinating.

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Dr Tommy Wood 14:24

Yeah, so at least in that portion of history that was reserved those stones are still on the beach and are still available for people to test out. And then also there's the there's the classic husa fell stone which is bent in strong man that is a stone in Iceland, which you know, so that is one of the classic streamlined events is named after a stone, which has a historical context in Iceland. So this is you know, a lot of this has kind of been baked into the culture essentially for centuries.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 14:50

Yeah, and then they have like the called manhood stones, right? Yeah. Obviously, I'm working on lifting the Denny stones which are in you know, Scotland, so Yeah, just very, super interesting history too. And as you know, part of the event, you were lifting natural stones, and helping people quite appreciate how weird and odd stone lifting is much less a natural stone on top of it. It's, uh, yeah, maybe you can describe what your experience was with it, it's, it's very different.



Dr Tommy Wood 15:25

Yeah, I think the, the natural stone press was probably the, the event that I was least certain about, again, as a pressing event. And it's so is there odd objects, and each stone is obviously completely different shape, some very, some very long and thin and others are just kind of like rough, round ish boulders. So you know, the contact points are very different getting onto the shoulders is is very different and sort of getting into position ready to press. And so, you know, at least in this competition is probably the case for most, most competitions, you don't get a huge amount of time to practice with the implements, right? Just for multiple reasons in here, this is a this is one on piece of farmland, but obviously we're pressing we're outside and on grass. And if like all the competitors were there, practicing with all stones, dropping them on the ground, are you just going to destroy that turf. And so like, the farm obviously wasn't super keen on that. So so we didn't really, because you can sort of like practice lapping the stones, maybe getting up to the shoulders, but then sort of pressing them, you couldn't really practice that a lot. So then you're basically coming up against something, you know, the weight of it, but you have no idea exactly how you're gonna approach it until it's standing in front of you and sort of that the clock is ticking. So that was that was that was interesting. But um, the, the work that that we done, cross rely pressing from weird angles, and like sandbag presses, and cleans and all that kind of stuff at show I felt pretty prepared and it wasn't, you know, and essentially my strength ran out rather than my scale. And that was always going to be something that was going to be going to be the case so like, it wasn't ever that get like getting out to the shoulders, finding a position to press from was actually relatively easy. And of course, like this isn't a novice category. So like there were like whole rafts of stones that I didn't get anywhere near the the open super heavyweights, that opening stone is 225 pounds of insane, which are crazy. Yeah. So the lowest stone weights. Luckily, were reasonable, reasonably manageable. And actually that ended up being one of the events I did better. And I think it came third on that event.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 17:31

Nice. There was a stone the top in stone you use



Dr Tommy Wood 17:35

one 145 on the top, the top one for for our category was 155. And then the two guys ahead of me the ones who lifted that and nobody else managed the 145 I probably could I actually I did the 145 and then I tapped out I didn't bother try the 155 because the 145 felt kind of slow and I probably had enough time to try it. But I was like if I dropped this on my head like it just was it not not really worth the concussion. So So yeah, I tapped out tapped out early once I Well, I still felt good.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 18:04

That did leave any interesting marks on your your forums or anything or did you kind of get through not to scale up from it?



Dr Tommy Wood 18:10

No, from from the natural stones? No. From the from the Atlas stones, which was essentially the first time I'd ever lifted out the stones. I had some wicked bruises up and down. Up and down, my honor. Yeah, some really some really massive bicep bruises. Trying to wrestle the heaviest stones. I bet but I mean, yeah, nothing. Nothing truly painful. Just a few bruises. Luckily,



Dr. Mike T Nelson 18:31

yeah, yeah. So in training, obviously, you didn't have access to natural stones or even Atlas stones. So what are some of the things that we ended up doing? Do you feel that kind of transferred the most, because I always think it's an interesting thing, especially from a programming standpoint of looking at a lift and kind of going, Okay, here's the thing they want to do. Here's the lifter, here's their capacity to serve, where they might be missing and try to get creative to sort of fill in those gaps when you may not have the exact thing that you're going to use in a competition.



Dr Tommy Wood 19:04

Yes, so for the for the pressing aspects. I'm thinking of various things that we did, like I have I have, I have reasonably heavy dumbbells, so up to 100 pounds, so putting fat like fat grips on those and doing sort of presses for presses from the shoulder just sort of like getting in funny positions with something that's not like really easy to grip onto a single dumbbell to do this like a single dumbbell. Yeah, kind of like essentially replacing like a circus Dumbo, if people have familiar with those. We did a lot of plate pressing, which is sort of so pressing with an open hand which I've never done before but I think really helps because then you know that you're strong enough to press even if you can't really grip onto the thing you can like press it more flat. So that made it so like you know, 45 pound plates plus maybe a little bit on on one side, and you do the we do the warrior stance to kind of off axis a little bit. Again, sort of getting an uncomfortable position but still feeling strong. And then we did have some sandbags, sandbag, clean and prep. And so like practicing with it like cleaning the sandbags, you know, with with higher reps, then when it got in stone, so I knew I could easily get that way to my shoulders. And then you know, do

a push press action to get up. So sort of comfortable with with the weights from various things, I push schools and things like that. So again, like not as a standard barbell. So various different ways of getting heads, I think all of that helped. for the, for the Atlas stones, I think the main the main, the main thing that we did were what I called the lollipop of death

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 20:45
for people with

D Dr Tommy Wood 20:48
basically a landmine attachment, and then bumper plates on the end, basically as many bumpers is like a fit on my my bar in the end and then essentially straddling the bar, and bear hugging it like you would in an atlas stone and then doing what what approximates to like a Romanian or stiff legged deadlift, just as sort of like practice getting your arms around something really heavy, and then and then lift lifting it up. And so, I mean, the, I think the heaviest stone I managed was 260. And I didn't get anywhere near that on on the lollipop just because of by I just couldn't get any more play, essentially. So then, like I was getting definitely getting to a point where I was just having to try stuff out to, you know, manhandle the stone into place. And I think, you know, one thing that I would shoot, you know, change the tree, you know, if I do it, again, is try and get my hands on some actual Atlas stones for the gym, because I think that's the one thing compared to literally everything else, where it's difficult to replicate, particularly at the heavier weights.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 21:56
Yeah, you can get kind of like, I played around with a stone trainer, which is just like a pipe that you can run a bunch of plates through and do like what I call a bear hug deadlift. So it's similar to your setup, but without it, the pro and the con of that is you can kind of get it off the ground, but you kind of miss a little bit of that pulling back motion with it. And because it's just played stuck together, you can't really lap it. So I found that the, the T bar, the landmine version kind of works pretty good. Because the other part two, I think that people forget is that there's obviously no no handles on any of these stones. So when you're picking it up, you'd actually have an open palm at the bottom, you're spreading your fingers as far as you can, and you're actually picking it off the ground with your hands open. And so a lot of people have, you know, weak wrists, weak finger, you know, just holding their hands even in that position. And maybe you're strong enough to get it, you know, off the ground. And obviously, you have more force on the outside, you're trying to bear hug it and that type of thing. But I've noticed a lot of people that are the hands

can be kind of a weak point. So just doing anything to train some reps in that position in that open hand position, I find helps quite a bit.

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Dr Tommy Wood 23:09

I think very early on you, you mentioned that. And again, this was sort of like going into this, I don't think I realized how many things that you do need to develop skills and strength in like, talking about open palm pressing and, and lifting that the stones and I was just like, I literally have no idea what you're talking about. So So I think one of the other things that we did very early on was some some rows, some plate rows, but again, with like an open hand underneath again, just like practicing getting that that open hand strength and sort of pulling from that from that position. Because again, like it's not, if you're just doing bodybuilding type stuff in the gym, which is the vast majority of my lifting career, there's just not a skill or a strength that you that you develop. So that was that was definitely something that I think helped to.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 23:57

Yeah, I mean, other than kind of playing the sandbags like go heavy Sam Bay, just try to lap it. I haven't found anything that's super transferable to once you get the stone on your lap. It's just such a It's such an honor movement. And then even then, like the stone size makes a huge difference. You have longer arms, which is definitely helpful. But then you'll run into an issue where the bigger stones no matter how long your arms are even like you know world Strongest Man, you'll see that their hands are all the way around it but they still can't touch. Right. So now you're left with if you can get and again, I've had strong men yell at me all the time for this that was smaller stones. I tell people like hold your hands on the opposite side because it's going to be stronger when you pull in. Yeah, they're like, No, you have to have your hands apart to do it. I'm like, for training if you're trying to get to a bigger stone, maybe but if your hands can touch, like if you interlock them, you're just going to be a lot stronger. Yeah. And the hard part with that is at some point, the stone is so big, you can't do that. And so you're left with this kind of oddball. overhand type of maneuver to get it into place to.

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Dr Tommy Wood 25:05

Yeah, and I think at some point, you know, I rowing in something that's 280 or 300 pounds, like, I mean that it gets, it gets really heavy, so that like towards the end, but I think the I managed to manage to lap the 280 pounds down, but then I've gotten my feet really wide to get down low enough to kind of get on, I kind of had to get under it to kind of scoop it up a little bit. And then it sort of like slips down through my legs. And then I ran out of

time. So so that's probably like, right at the limit of where I was. But yeah, that's that, that they'll mean, like being able to sort of row in essentially that amount of weight. And then yeah, from from the lap. I think Luckily, by you know, like most people were I struggle with off the floor. Once I got it in my lap, I think, you know, maybe 280 or 300 was within my capabilities base from all the other stuff that we've done, but you got to get it in your lap in the first place was doesn't count.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 26:01

Yeah. The andreeva looking it's it's a it's, it almost goes against all the things you've been told never to do in the gym. Yeah, right. Don't pick anything up with a high hip point. Don't flex your spine, grip the bar as tight as you possibly can, like for stone lifting. So the direct opposite of all that? Yeah, you've got your hands under it as close as you can, your hands, by definition are going to be open, you're going to be hugging the stone, it's actually easier with your hips up a little bit high. So it's more like a rounded back stiff legged deadlift looking thing. So yeah.

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Dr Tommy Wood 26:37

Yeah, I think you know, there's just something about I guess that because because like none of it and not none of strongman is this sort of, like, really static rigorous thing is very much like, sometimes you just have to like figure out on the fly and just like do whatever you can just like trust that your your movement and your strength is good enough. Like there's something that I enjoy about that. I've done a little bit of powerlifting and, you know, I just strong man is a lot more enjoyable for me just because, you know, it's there's just, I know, there's like, the more the more I sort of like dynamic and changing nature of it, I enjoy.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 27:18

Yeah, I think people kind of looking at it kind of under appreciate that even with some of the grip sports stuff, too. It's that the amount of problem solving and stuff you have to do, because a lot of strongman is moving with load. And until people have done it. Like, it's really easy, I think to under appreciate how much different that is? Yeah, like I haven't done much with a yoke at all, like the first time ever did a yoke was years ago. And it was pretty damn light. I think the max ever went was only like 425 or something like that. And so people listening this, you know, the big thing, you have a rack on it. And I only had to stand up like three or four inches, that wasn't too bad. And then you think, okay, just walk with it. How hard is that? Holy crap. Like, it feels like when you move in just a couple inches, like the whole thing. It feels like it's just trying to force your face right into the

asphalt. And this is like a relatively stable structure to it, there's nothing really moving on it. But when you have just any amount of mass, even like heavy farmers walks when you're doing a turn, the first time I did a heavier farmers walk and did a short turn, you forget that they're gonna want to spin on you, right, because of this centrifugal force going around. And if you turn real fast, they're gonna want to keep going in whatever direction you had them pointed at soon, just the ability to, you know, rotate through the hands and the forearm to try to direct them to can be quite an issue.

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Dr Tommy Wood 28:44

Yeah, and yeah, and like you said, it's that kind of it's that kind of stuff. What like taking those those variables into account? I think is, is an interesting part of trying to express whatever strength you know, you do have. Yeah.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 28:59

And how did the grip strength kind of play into this? Because you said like, Yeah, I'd say most lifters in general, don't really do a lot of grip stuff. And we're this kind of thing made the most sense to me ever was. I got an axle bar, right. So an actual bar, it's a two inch bar, the one I have is smooth, there's no knurling or anything on it. And the amount of difference at that time between my axle double overhand compared to a mixed grip deadlift was I think my dad left at that point, I was like around 400. And I think my first axle poll was 155, or something just utterly a freaking abysmal and it was the oddest sensation to know that it is well below my deadlift capacity. But the fact that if I couldn't hold on to it, like it literally felt like you got frozen in the bottom position, like the rest of your body, like was almost like paralyzed, and this sort of Weird bizarre away. And like the reverse is true to like, the number of people who've ever gone into the gym and you're doing deadlifts to stay at a normal bar, and you pick it up and you're like, Oh, yeah, today's gonna be a good day. It's usually that you feel more secure with the bar, right? the stronger your grip strength is you just kind of more secure. So that's when it kind of dawned on me even for people who may not be competing in any sport or group sport, a strongman or anything, that having some basic capacity there is going to have a high amount of transfer to just their everyday lifts to.

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Dr Tommy Wood 30:32

Yeah, I'm I definitely saw that that same thing. And again, like I mentioned at the beginning, I basically I basically had never trained anything to do to do with grip. And so when we started, I think you asked me to figure out what my best like double overhand deadlift was just like a regular bar. It was I think it was high 200. Maybe 295. Yeah, I think I

put three or five or 315 like I got it, but I probably lost a bit at the top. So probably wasn't a true good left. By the end. I think I'm at that by nine months later, I think I managed to get 405 100 pound jump. Huge difference when it made ish. And again, like we got an axle. I think the first axle I did was maybe, yeah, maybe 175 or something, yeah, added 100 pounds to that too. And you're right, then like any time, well, first of all, allows you to then not have to rely on things. So now if we're doing like heavy dumbbell rows or something else, I can just do it without, you know, having having to worry about around grip or your straps or anything like that, which I would never been able to do before. But then particularly for deadlifts. Like, again, you just feel like so much more confident that your connection to the bar is good. And previously, I'd have to, you know, resort to straps early on or a mixed grip. And then even with a mixed grip, you feel like oh, yeah, like the the grip is not going to be what's what's limiting you. And that adds a lot of confidence in terms of what your main contacts to the bar. And so I felt a big difference with that. And again, it didn't take a huge amount of work, but it was continuously a focus for nine months. And it did make it made a big difference both in the grip, like specific things, but then also transferred to a lot of other things.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 32:20

Yeah, and then I swear to you, though, you know, working some, like you've never really done grip before. And as a back gain and strong Dude, it's, you can see pretty big changes if you just kind of program it somewhat intelligently, just because it hasn't been used. So it's probably kind of just, you know, lagging a little bit behind too, which is always nice to see.

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Dr Tommy Wood 32:41

Yeah, that's the main problem that happened was like trying to gain a bit in the run up to the competition. But the point, right, like my wedding ring was really difficult to move because my, for the first time I was actually training my fingers to do something. So the loss of my fingers made my work really, really tough. But you know, it's a good problem to have.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 33:06

Yeah, like, when I was in Finland, the group competition I was in. Some of the competitors have what I call sausage hands, where they're, they're just huge. And the one guy who I met for the first time at the Arnold, his name is aarto. It's like one of the top probably what's called pinch lifting in the world. So pinch with your just hands are kind of straight. And nobody Adam was competing at the Arnold. So he introduced us to me and so we

hung out with him while we were there when they were in the US competing. So Archer was going around the Arnold where there's a lot of you know, very strong individuals. And he goes, let me see your hand. And he looks at all these hands and he points at there's some muscle and he goes what you do strong muscle man. No thumb muscle,



33:53

no muscle.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 33:56

If you look at his, it looks like someone buried a chicken wing in it. It's just like, you know,



Dr Tommy Wood 34:06

I'm not sure he'd be particularly impressed with my hands. So



Dr. Mike T Nelson 34:08

So yeah, yeah. And then in Finland, it was funny. There was a guy. I think he was from the Ukraine, but I may have that incorrect. He was a stonemason in his profession. And he was maybe an inch or two taller than me around the same height. And he had massive hands like I have average size hands for my height. He he made my hands like tiny, just easy, huge hands. You're just like, holy crap. So that's



Dr Tommy Wood 34:38

really, really cool. And then if you want to hold on to stuff that makes that makes a big difference.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 34:44

Yeah, yeah, it makes a big difference. Cool. And my last part I would add to for people listening if they want to add some grip stuff, super easy. Just get a pair of fat grips, right the if you're a male, the blue ones, probably if you're female, maybe the black ones and just On your bar and just do deadlifts like double overhand, you know, do that and then do some type of open palm. I know we had to do some, like play curls and stuff, too. Yeah. Anything where your hand is more an open or a pinch grip?



Dr Tommy Wood 35:13

I mean, like some bar as well, though, you don't need to get the specific.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 35:18

Yeah, so explain to people what the hell is Saxon bar is



Dr Tommy Wood 35:20

yes. Saxon, but again, not something that I'd ever seen or experienced before. But it is basically, I mean, it's basically like an iron to buy for essentially, two by four, two by six, I think I think mine's two by three. Yeah, something like that. Anyway, so it's basically like a rectangular block with obviously, then, you know, space on the end to put to put plates. So then when you, when you lift it, you have to write so then the narrower end of the rectangle is kind of in your in your hand, but then you have to lift it by pinching the bar, because you can't wrap your fingers around it. So that's that kind of that's that kind of pinch grip. Which again, was really good for sort of like getting used to kind of get rid of getting your thumb into something. And then also, like wrapping your whole hand like, and you particularly like your pinkies, sort of round something as much as you can imagine that and sort of like really getting that that grip, and again, not something I'd ever done before. And yeah, really helpful to kind of get a get a handle on how you really grip onto something.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 36:26

Yeah, I got that from my buddy, Adam glass. And so I've been able to train with him. He's a good friend of mine, he's competed many times and mighty meds and the Arnold and Finland and everywhere. And I think I agree with him too, that if you had only buy two pieces of equipment, and you have the ability to train, you're already relatively stronger, even just starting out. And you don't want grip to be kind of a limiter, I would say any type of fat bar work, right, so you can get fat reps and put that on. And then if you can't afford it, like a Saxon bar, I think is super useful. Because there's just something about having this position. And it's going to be so much weaker than your deadlift. Right. But if you think about the amount of overload you can get with even a double overhand deadlift, and like a Saxon bar deadlift, compared to a lot of people start with these kind of weird grippers and all this other stuff. And yeah, there's like a time and a place for some of that stuff. And if you know where you're really weak, that some of the things that may be useful, but I just think it goes back to just, you know, old school lifting principles, right? How can I put the thing I want to train put the most amount of stress on it? And particularly on that thing,

and not have everything else be a limiter? And if I can do that under a heavier load, then I'm probably going to make faster progress to

D Dr Tommy Wood 37:43
Yeah. And

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 37:46
what was it like the first few times you use the Saxon bar? What did you feel it? Because I've noticed that it feels very different.

D Dr Tommy Wood 37:54
I mean, it's it's but I mean, it's essentially like trying to deadlift, a wet fish.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 37:59
Yeah.

D Dr Tommy Wood 38:02
Like, just just imagine in front of you, you had like 100 pound tuner, and you just have to like, and you have to deadlift it. Like that's essentially what it felt like. And it's really funny because, right, I mean, it's essentially a deadlift, motion, and you could deadlift, five 600 pounds, but then you put 95 pounds on this bar, and it just won't come off the floor. That's, that's essentially what we're what it felt like. So then, yeah, we did a lot of, you know, sending some videos and we sort of like worked on a hand positioning, and I found that a lot easier to get in. So for, for Axel and Saxon. For me personally, it's easier for me to get the right positions of my hands if I do it sort of Sumo style, whereas on a regular deadlift, I'll do like conventional stance. So that that kind of helped and sort of, then just thinking about sort of like, like screwing your hand onto it, and really then like clamping in your thumb on one side of the focusing on the, like Pinky, I think we did on the other side. And it's not sort it's not necessarily sort of like straight up and down, you sort of like come in a bit of an angle. And then actually, equally, because that's not the limiter, you know, you might have your arm, you might have your arm, your elbow is broken, so not entirely straight, use the right guy, you can come in a bit of an angle to get a bit of grip on it. And again, like on the weights on the sacks and even once you got up to like 130 or 150 pounds, you know, then sort of like a slight break in the elbow. definitely helps. But yeah, that the first few times it's very humbling thinking like this really is a very heavy and I

really can't pick it up.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 39:38

Yeah, and what I noticed too, is that I had never and I had been doing some good stuff at that point, too. Like, I had never felt that amount of stress from like my fingertips through my thumb like halfway up my my forearm. You get done in your hands. You're just like, Whoa, what was that?

D Dr Tommy Wood 39:56

I definitely noticed that I think just just because, I mean, if you don't have much strength to begin with, I never put that much weight on the Saxon Bible when we started training for Denny rings, because that was one of the events, like the first few times training that like, you sort of like have claw hand just because of the the the way that the way that you have to have to grip it. So that was that that was, again, I think it was a great training stimulus. But yeah, just completely not not anything that I was used to before.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 40:32

Yeah, so explain a Dyneema for people listening are probably wondering what the hell is that?

D Dr Tommy Wood 40:38

So the kidney stones again, these is to two stones in Scotland. And there's some legends about like picking up the Denny stones and walking with them across across a bridge. I think Denny was the first person who did that, I think the original stones and so there's two of them, one is slightly smaller and slightly lighter. So as so they are different shapes. So the uneven shapes and even weights and heights. I think the original the the stones were like 700 or 730 pounds, something like that. Yeah,

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 41:15

in total with 734.

D Dr Tommy Wood 41:17

Yeah. And so you can, you can practice that. So so the event here was denee was like you can get replica denee rings. So rogue makes make someone I think other people make

them too. But so those are the ones I think they use the competition. So those are the ones that I got to practice with. So you basically have your loja to loading pins with the the rings and the rings of different sizes. And then I practiced having the peak heights, different heights, because with the Denny rings, the the peak heights are different that they're off by one or two inches. So we did practice that. But in the end, actually that that wasn't the case in the competition bottle. I was Yeah, there were just these the pin heights were the same. Practice that because that, you know, that was a possibility that sure, it'd be possible. And like you mentioned, you have to get used to the fact that one of them is going to one of the rings, or one of the ways is going to come up before the other Yeah, like that, like practice being unbalanced while you're trying to lift 600 pounds. And so so you have these two weight plates, or stacks of stacks of plates on your loading pens of the rings. And you basically have to straddle them, to lift them. So you're lifting one of them between your legs. And the other one is kind of is kind of behind you. So like not only are they different heights, different weights, you're sort of rotated as you lift them in again, like breaking every single rule. Anybody ever told you about? lifting weights? But yeah, so that's like all of those things that are part of the sort of part of the skill, as well, as you know, positioning the ring in the hand correctly, which I think, again, because we practice that, yeah, you sort of put it higher up in your hand, and you would think to naturally, and I think having practiced that definitely allowed me to sort of hang with guys who are much stronger than me. But we're basically just winging it in terms of technique. Again, so those little tricks can definitely make a big difference on the on the day.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 43:24

Yeah. And what did you end up doing for weight? It was a I saw hold on the competition, correct? Yeah. So

D Dr Tommy Wood 43:28

so each cat each, like weight category had specific weight. So so I knew what the two different weight stacks are going away. And then it was a lift and hold for max time. So I think they were there were 315 and 275. So 590 pounds. I think I held for 10 or 12 seconds. Oh,

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 43:48

that's good. Yeah, that's really good. Yeah. How did your hands look afterwards?



Dr Tommy Wood 43:54

Yes. On the video, I can see you can see my eyes. Though. So actually, I got all of that. I have a lot of that in training. I ripped open my palm one point didn't mean a lot of bruising along sort of like the the base of the phalanges on my palm, like the ring ring sets of use of like have it in. So actually from from the from the competition itself, I'd sort of conditioned my hands a bit. And it was fine. After that, I sort of got got the bad. I've got the bad palm rep out of the way that healed in time. And then I made sure to LIKE shave down on my calluses and all that kind of stuff. And I think that that helped too. So So actually, it wasn't too bad at all.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 44:37

Yeah, it's one of those weird lists where I said, it's a lift that gets to McGill nightmares, right? Because what you're doing, you're doing a partial deadlift. You're rotated One Direction just to get in the position to do it. You're an off axis. So one of them's gonna come up before the other because you're picking up at a different heights. You're almost doing a Weird bastardize side bend. And then it's super intensive on grip two, because if anyone's hold on to like a ring, you're like last not too bad. But then depending on your hand size, the even the bigger ring on mine, it's basically I can't get my finger my hand all the way underneath. So it's like flexing your hand almost backwards at the same time you're trying to pull up on it. So it's, uh, it's weird.



Dr Tommy Wood 45:29

That was probably, again, I mean, compared to the other guy thing. I don't know where i, where i came on, that was like maybe maybe third or fourth. But But yeah, it was probably one of the just because of like, having having practiced it and like, develop that skill over the time. And then like it sort of be going okay, on the day, that was probably one of the events that they enjoyed the most, even though like I originally looked at the, the weights, and I was like, I'm just not even sure I can pick that up. So being able to do that. Yeah, I was really happy with that.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 46:04

No, that's awesome. What other events do they have there?



Dr Tommy Wood 46:08

Well, yeah, so we talked about Atlas stones, denee rings, natural stone precedent. The

other two, originally it was going to be power stairs. But they had to change event venue. So ended up being a obviously similar implement, but a different movement. It was a duck walk to load. And the load was, was pretty lows. It's a few inches. So I practice, I practice loading for like three feet or something. I

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 46:33

don't know, right? Yeah. Like, why did you practice the wrong? I'm like, the kind of unwritten rule and I told you this to a strong man is like, imagine you have almost no warm up. And I guarantee you, they're gonna change at least two or three events to it, because that happens, like all the time, especially in novice events.

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Dr Tommy Wood 46:52

Yeah. And so again, I took that to heart and I was like, just ready for like, Whatever happens on the day, you know, I feel like I've prepared enough. So So yeah, so that was happy that the load load height was really low. And it was like it was 25 feet, it really wasn't a very well, that's not too bad, then it wasn't a very far carry at all. And actually, you I almost wish that it was longer because then then I think I could have because it was a point where I was probably moving as fast as I could move. Really? Yeah. And so then I could have let my conditioning sort of like, help separate me out from the other guys, baby. So that so that walk, and then carpool was the first event. And it was like slightly uphill on gravel. Oh, horrible. Yeah, again. So there was, so a lot of people. So I think I lost my footing once and a lot of people did. The first one. Imagine the girl who went up first. I think she may have fallen over and I was standing next to this guy. And he was like, that's gonna happen a lot today. And yeah, so like, probably at least 50% of the competitors had like major slips or whatever. But you know, it was just it was it was part of it. And so no problem but it was it was funny because obviously not it's slightly men were fairly early on. And then they sort of it was a it was a sigh on XP and will they call it lovingly called the tote the toaster and look a bit like a toaster. And so for us to have the driver who's the gym owner is a strong man and then like two kids in the back and then as the weight as the weight categories went up so like into the open from open lightweight up to open like super heavy, they will just add more strong men in into the back so so like by the end by like the the open super heavies. They probably had. It was I was probably 1500 pounds of human in this car plus a load of weights in the back. That was kind of funny. Like, you know, actually, I think one of the one of the people who was who acted as a weight in the car joke today. It was like the worst Uber ever or the worst class ever. But it was literally like 300 pound people like kind of climbing into the car to taxes. Wait, so

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 49:07
that was kind of fun. And it's always interesting to see him get in and out of the car too. Because most of them are not especially the high level. They're not usually short people.

D Dr Tommy Wood 49:16
Oh no. So

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 49:16
watching these massive, you know, sides of beef of eyeballs trying to crawl into this tiny cup.

D Dr Tommy Wood 49:22
Yeah, at least at least one of these guys is like like just earned his pro card as a heavyweight strong man. And he was just there to like help out on the day and by help out it was like after the after the Atlas stone event. He went and like i think you know, even the open super heavies in this competition went up into sort of like maybe the mid three hundreds for the stones. And then there was one 440 pound stone that he he showed everybody how it was done. And so like he was one of the main weights and weights in the car and yeah, he's a big guy.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 49:57
I remember like the the first probably competitor A strong man I ever met was at an NSC, a conference in Minnesota. And Dave Austin who's competed at the world Strongest Man back in the day, he was here in Minnesota, training a good buddy of mine at his gym. So he came out to the one of the nsca events at the Gillingham brothers route. So Brad Gillingham has competed in powerlifting, sponsored by GNC for a while is like he's dead lifted over 880 pounds. I don't know how many times and so I got my picture with like, these three huge guys, the smallest one was probably 643 20 I think and I'm just like, Oh, hello. You don't realize like how massive some of these humans are. And you stand next to him. You're just like, holy crap.

D Dr Tommy Wood 50:46
This I was at this competition with with my wife, Elizabeth, who was who was was main cheerleader and take some great videos. And she did some great videos. And some

excellent, excellent drawing. I

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 50:56
love the commentary.

D Dr Tommy Wood 50:57
Yeah. The first thing, you know, in a room of average people, you know, I'm a reasonably big guy, but sort of like, you know, this competition. She's like, these people make you look really small.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 51:12
Yeah, and it's, it's also crazy to watch just the fluidity of which large humans like that can move with load. Yeah, it's amazing. It's like mind boggling, you know, and I always, to me, it's fascinating how, how higher level athletes of all types make really hard things look easy. You know, but then we've got everyone in the gym trying to make moderately interesting, heavy things look hard. You know. It's like the normal gym is like Bizarro world. And the funny story on that is, so my good buddy, Adam, who is competing at the competition for grip stuff in Texas, was probably a couple years ago. And they had a medley setup. So Medley is you've got a whole bunch of these different events, pick this odd object odd, you know, all these things, was like maybe 12 different things. And they usually have some stuff in there, that gets progressively harder. But you know, some of the Medley stuff because of the space and the time you have set up. There's only so many things that are heavy, you can fit in there. So it's a lot of smaller, like tiny pinch grips, and this kind of weird, esoteric stuff. That doesn't make sense until you try it and you're like, Oh, my God, that's impossible. But the people looking at it, you know, it's like, yeah, it's not as impressive looking. And the goal is to see who can lift the most implements, and whoever can do it in the shortest amount of time. So my buddy, Adam, goes through, gets all the implements and in record time and his wife, Ashley was there. The first time she'd ever you know, seen him in an actual competition. And you see all these other people after him just not quite make it. And she goes to him. She goes, Adam, she's like, I don't understand. When are the other people going to start trying? And he goes, they are trying, they just can't do it. And she's like, but you made it look so easy. That was pretty funny.

D Dr Tommy Wood 53:11
Yeah, that's the ice. He's, uh, based on you sort of you introducing me to his work for me? I follow him on on Instagram. Oh, yeah. You know, like some of the stuff that he does, right?

You think, right, that's not that heavy. And then you try to do it. You know, there's only a very, very small number of people in the world that can can do that. Yeah, it's it's Yeah,

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 53:34

especially if you don't know what a Saxon bar is. And you're looking at and you're like, oh, he did 300 pounds on a Saxon deadlift. I think he did. 290. Somewhere in there. Pretty close to it. And if you don't know anything you knew never tried a Saxon bar. You're like, Yeah, I don't know. That's not that heavy. The deadlift. Yeah, you try it with just a lightweight and you're like, holy crap. That's insane.

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Dr Tommy Wood 53:53

Yeah, that's really hard. It's very impressive. Yeah.

D

Dr. Mike T Nelson 53:57

And talking briefly about conditioning. Did you feel like your conditioning in terms of cardiovascular output ability to repeat work that that was pretty good for the competition?

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Dr Tommy Wood 54:07

Yeah, I think so. And, and one of the things that I really appreciate over the year was so I hadn't haven't really done that much cardio for a long period of time, having having previously been an endurance athlete, and doing huge amounts of endurance volume, I sort of got it got a bit tired of that. And so, so yeah, I think even with a real you know, what might be considered a relatively small amount of aerobic work, I felt like my conditioning was was in a really good spot. And probably, you know, by the time we got to the competition is like a balance of strength and conditioning. I was probably in the best shape I've ever been in my life, like being able to be both strong and fit at the same time. So, and I think that, particularly in terms of where I had no, no problems, like recovering between events, I didn't feel fatigued at all. I think I like some of the awful stuff that you made me do on the rower? Definitely, like, like another, like, none enlightened, none of the events are required. Any kind of sort of conditioning that that that came from that. So you say, Yeah, no, I thought I was in a really good, really good place for, you know, from that standpoint.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 55:19

Yeah, we just use a very simple split, for the most part, most of it was Monday, Wednesday, Friday ish was some type of lifting kind of a hybrid stuff, a little bit of grip stuff each day. And then we had kind of one sort of a medley med Connie type day, and then a Tuesday, Thursday of just 2030 minutes kind of cardiac, I'll pull it no higher heart rate, but nothing, nothing too crazy, because you know, me Did your 2k and did some of your other vo two measures yours were all, they were pretty good. You know, so the only thing that was maybe missing was potentially a little bit on that 40 to 62nd kind of time range to repeat. My bias when I usually train people is that, to me like conditioning to something that is once 100% control that very, very high level control, right? I mean, you can get in pretty good condition shape within six to nine months, if you're doing it intelligently, pretty easily. No matter how good you progress you at some point, yeah, you can definitely get stronger during that time period, but you're probably not going to double your deadlift, you know, there's going to be just a limit to how strong you can get in a period of time. So I always tend to err a little bit too far, maybe on conditioning, as long as it's not taking away from the quality of performance they're doing. Because more often than not, I've seen several competitions, where if they throw in a longer Medley or by end of the day, and you add heat and nerves and everything else into it, you can see some people who started off really, really good, who are just a puddle by the end of the day. And they were strong enough. They just couldn't repeat that amount of work again, and it kind of cost them.

D

Dr Tommy Wood 56:59

Yeah, yeah, I think ideally, like some of the repeated high intensity work, he probably would have preferred me to end up doing a lot, a lot more rounds in practice, sort of like, you know, recovering get back. But I think it got to the point particularly on the rower like I just I could never recover in time. I'd be like, I'd be sitting there for like 15 minutes waiting for my, my heart rate down. So So yeah, I probably I probably could have, in the end would have would have benefited from from spending more time on that. But luckily, it wasn't a limiter on the day.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 57:36

Yeah. And you want to describe for the listeners and watchers, some of the fun stuff we did on the rower.

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Dr Tommy Wood 57:41

Yes. So, so for the first the for the first few months. It was mainly, like I think it started out with like 30 seconds, essentially flat out with a with a minute recovery for like something like four to eight rounds at times. And that mean, that was the that was the first time I'd sort of like really gone on the roller and anger for a very long time. And like

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 58:07

that background and ruin for people listening.

D Dr Tommy Wood 58:09

So yeah, so in the past, yeah, as a as a in college, both as an undergrad, and then in med school, like rowing was my main sport. And so you kind of fall out of love with the rowing machine when you spend, I mean, just hours, several hours on it a week. And, and so that was okay. But then like, every time I felt like I was getting a handle on the intervals, you'd either increase the interval time where you decrease the recovery. And so then, like, we definitely got to points where like the recovery period was the same or shorter than, than the interval period. And then like that gets that gets pretty miserable. But then after that, I think stupidly, I said, like, so then obviously, two times a week we're obviously doing this like this, this sort of low intensity aerobic work which which I ended up doing on the assault bike because if I did it on the rower I you know, I just it's difficult for me to wrap my head around how Yeah, I've row well I've really low intensity is like my body doesn't understand that. Whereas the the the assault bike was was fine. But then I was like, Hey, man, like I'm just not really sure whether I am progressing on my cardio. Like, you know, I feel like I'm still getting the same heart rate for the same wattage and I'm just like not really improving on that. And you're like, well then why don't we test your via to max. Like, well, that was my own fault. If

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 59:44

you walked into that one, just like

D Dr Tommy Wood 59:45

don't say stuff like that. You'll be like, Well, why don't we test it. So, so then I did 2k tests, I think six days six which was good. I mean, that's like up there with All my best to K tests Really? Yeah. Even like going back i think is probably 10 or 15 seconds slower than my best. But considering that was more than 10 years ago, like, Oh, yeah, super, super happy with that,

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:00:12
especially in that range to, I mean, especially well below sub seven, you know, especially for someone who I mean, we did a fair amount of rolling, but that wasn't like your main gig. Like that wasn't the main

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:00:22
goal to get a better 2k? You know, no, no, like, once a week, I was doing intervals of up to 60 seconds, right? And then so like to translate that, you know, six and a half minutes of utter misery was no that so that was really good. So I was happy with that. But then, based on that you have you have the the meal, the meal now. intervals? Yes. Which are. So each interval is five is 500 meters, then no 100, then 203 104 105 100 meters. Yep, with 30 seconds rest in between bikes back to back. And each interval is based on a percentage of your vo to max waters, which is basically your average watts for your 2k tests. I think is it 175% than 125%? That 100%, then pretty close. It's

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:01:19
170 120 180 and 70. I

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:01:24
think percent. And so then it's then actually even getting down to like the 170% to get the average time down to that fast enough to like, it's hard, like,

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:01:38
because you're such a short period of time, too.

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:01:40
Yeah. And so then the, like, the first two or three are fine. And actually, it's one of the reasons why it's so like devilish devilishly awful is because each successive lie even though it gets longer, that pace comes down enough that you can do it. Like just absolutely, there's no secret and so, so that was fine. Actually. Well, I don't think I ever got and then and then you sort of like so then it first that you get like some kind of period of time to recover. And then you do again, I don't think I ever managed to do more than three rounds. I think the goal eventually was to go up to five rounds. But like even doing three rounds of that, man, like, it took me two or three days to recover from that every week. So

I by the time I was feeling good again, like it happened again. And I'm sure it was really good for me. But yeah, that was that was an That was tough. And you can probably talk about why it's such a good thing to do. But yeah, one of those things you sort of love to hate?

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:02:46

Yeah, I got that from my buddy, Dr. Kenneth J. And it's his protocol he adapted. So weird. The first time I saw it, I was like, What? This makes no sense, right? Because you're going everywhere from like, 170% revia. to max down to, I think it's like 75%. But what's fascinating about it is when you're at 170%, it's only 100 meters, and then it scales down. So your lower percentages are at longer distances. And it's so deceptive because like, at the end, you almost call yourself into Oh, okay. And you have very long breaks between intervals, like I'll take sometimes up to six, seven minutes between intervals. Yeah. And so at that point, you're just like, okay, yeah, I feel all right. I can it can I can do this, right, the first round, you're like, that was hard, but I'm okay, I got this second round, you start, you're like, Ooh, this definitely feels a little harder. But, you know, I can kind of make my way through it. I got it. I got, you know, five minute break. Now. I'm good. Third round, no problem. And then you start the third round, and you're like, holy shit, this is horrible. Like, what the hell happened? Yeah, but if you figure out like, if you do the math, and I've had people work up to, you know, five rounds of that, which the other part for people listening is you have to hit the percentages each time to. So it's not like you're just doing work and your quality of work is a scaling back, you're literally hitting within the same percentages every time. So you're doing this high quality work, and then you rest a while, but then you're repeating it again, or a lot of people, if they look at interval work, you just see the quality of the work, just, you know, they were pulling, you know, 400 watts, by the end, they're pulling like 270, you know, so their quality just got dramatically less. But if you end up doing five rounds of that, I think it's 7500 meters total, I think. So. I mean, it's, yeah, it's a way is it's pretty brutal. But what's fascinating is, it seems to help everything from in rowing from, you know, low, you know, 500 meters to 2k to even like a 5k time. So it's like one of those things where it's brutal, but like for almost anything in there, it's kind of been my, my sort of go to just be It works so well. But it's hideous.

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:05:04

Yeah. And I kind of, in the back of my mind, I kind of imagined that I could get in, you know, in the next year or so get to a point where I could sort of be approaching my best five 5k time again, but I don't want to tell you that because you're gonna make me do loads and loads more miana. So, I'm still struggling with that thought whether I want to set that as a goal.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:05:25

Yeah, and even the intervals, like I think, kind of on my high end, again, I got this from kind of day two is, if you can do 30 seconds on 30 seconds off for eight to 12 rounds and hold almost the same wattage through that. Dad, that's pretty badass. Right? That tells me that like that high end is pretty well developed. Because when you start like the first one round, you're like, Okay, the second round, and Okay, you start getting a third, fourth this. It's crazy how much with only like a one to one work rate to rest ratio? how fast that like accumulated fatigue just destroys you. Yeah. Good times. Yeah. Cool. Yeah. Anything else you wanted to add about the training program? Anything else?

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:06:20

No, I don't think so. I think, like I said, a couple of times, like the the balance was really, really good. It works really, really well, for me, over the end of developing across all the facets needed. And I guess, like, one of the things that we want to talk about was, you know, with some of the benefits of just like trying out a session, I'm really glad that I did it. And I do do hope to do it again, just because, you know, I trained by myself in my home gym. And, you know, I'm certainly like, this is this, the, there's no, there's no intention, like, I'm not gonna win, right? Like my categories. Like when I when I used to run marathons or half marathons, like, I was never, you know, like, wait, you know, six foot two, and you're 200 pounds, like, you're not gonna win a marathon anytime soon. Yeah, but there's just something about, you know, like, just testing your own abilities, just to kind of like, see, see how you do that, I think is is really beneficial. And then, you know, also like training up specific skills and testing them out. And then there's also something you know, there's a, there's a, there's a great crowd, great camaraderie, everybody was really nice. You know, it was it was like a nice day out as well. And, you know, depending on how and where you train, like, you know, some people who do obstacle course, racing or CrossFit, right, you get that from from the gym environment every day, which is great. I think it's one of the benefits of those kinds of training environments. But that's not something that I have currently. So it's just really nice to just go out and meet other people, and then just sort of just test yourself a bit. And again, like, God, nothing reads compare it to, and that's also so there's no pressure attached either, but you just sort of like get to see how you perform and like, really enjoy that.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:08:05

Yeah, and I mean, I think there's something to just, you know, putting your putting the stamp in the mail and signing your name of like, I'm going to do X thing on x date, you know, because it's, it's different also to have to perform on a specific date. Right? If you're training you're like, I feel pretty good. Today, I'm going to go for a PRN and I feel so good.

Today, I'm gonna back off and that's part of the training process, and it's probably a more intelligent way to go. And it's a completely different thing to be like, Okay, today is the day is go time no matter what. Yeah, no, and then like, you know, how much do I want to push the risk reward ratio, you know, obviously my bias if you're just competing a novice is don't injure yourself and you do what you can and then do it again. But I mean, I I don't like competing I do some grip competitions now. And that's not that big of a deal just because I've done so freakin many of them. Adam used to live here so you'd host like three or four a year which is pretty easy. But for like powerlifting and strongman and that kind of stuff like oh god like the first powerlifting meet I ever did. I've probably like pissed myself to sleep the night before. I was like a complete worried mess about everything because it was so unknown. I didn't have a coach there. My coach was online. But I think just doing it enough to where you kind of know what to expect. And I was kind of also surprised everyone was like, super nice, like, super helpful. I mean, I wasn't there. I wasn't gonna win anything. I mean, I remember like, I hit all three deadlifts so they let you do a fourth deadlift and I had to borrow some guys belt because I never even trained with a belt. I didn't have a friggin belt to do deadlifts. I tried to find a single at the week of the meet and I'm like, run around shops trying to find one I ended up getting one that's like two sizes too small. And then you get there and you realize, yeah, everyone looks like the leaves in a singlet. You know, it's just it's kind of part of the deal. But I think it's all Use especially if you're a coach to kind of at least go through those things because you'll learn a lot in, in the process. And like I said, even just a handful of strongman stuff I've done. Everyone's super nice. They're super helpful. Everyone's there, like totally for the right reasons. Yeah, but in terms of like, hyper organized, well run to things like strong men's usually dead last, right? Because there's always something's gonna happen, some implements not gonna show up. So I'm just gonna get screwed in the schedule. Like we had a, like a 440 pound frame carry. And they had all these brand new implements that this gym had made. And they go last orange painted the handles on it. And they were glossed, like, you could not get shocked to stick to this and you couldn't use straps for the event. So the warm up is like, Alright, we've got it loaded, I think at like, 350. Everyone looks around, okay, like literally 60 seconds later. All right, it's loaded to 440. All right, you guys got like a minute. Alright, y'all good. I ran over, like 440, just to see if I can deadlift it, sat it down. And the promoters behind me goes, Alright, everyone good. I'm like, Oh, so that's my warmup. Okay. Just the way it happens, you know,

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:11:14

and I did. So, I mean, obviously, I didn't know what to expect. And I think this is a, this is a good learning point for for coaches, which is that, you know, going through that kind of thing, so that you can help your clients have some idea of what to expect, I think, was really useful. So like, we said, this multiple times, just like be prepared for something to

change, you're not going to get much warm up, like, and so, you know, I took I took some bands, you know, did some stuff just so I could warm up a bit, did some sort of like RPR drills, so I wake up the muscles a little bit, just because we'd sort of, we've practiced that, and all that is just super useful. And then I was also on the day, you know, just like ready that, like, Whatever happens, you know, it's gonna be fine. It's just super normal, and event changes, you don't get any warm up, you really get to practice with the implement, you know, then that's fine. And again, just because you've had those experiences, you could you could pass them on. And that definitely helped me sort of set expectations on a day. And then you know, when, when just fine.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:12:15

Yeah, and it's usually not that bad. If you know, that's what's going to happen, right? Because if you think like when you're, what, at least what I do, when I prepare for an event, like the amount of times I run through different simulations in my head is probably nauseated, right? But if you're running a better simulation through your head, and stuff changes, you're gonna be like, okay, yeah, I kind of figured that what happened, you know, if you're expecting like the Swiss precision, clockwork Olympic lifting type meet, to apply to stay strong man, especially at a local level. And you expect that and you get there, like, I saw a couple other competitors, they were just completely screwed from the starters. They're like beside themselves, and you realize it's like, oh, they don't even know what the minimum warmup they would need. They were so used to taking 15 minutes to warm up for heavy deadlift. Now, they had five, they were just like, wow,

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:13:01

you know, and I get it, like, if you haven't practiced that, it's very nerve inducing, where if you know ahead of time, you can kind of at least go Okay, I know, I need to hit this and this, and I'm good for that. So it's, it's not as bad. And yeah, and, and one thing, like, in particular, at this event, and actually doesn't really surprise me at all. So they pre post the weights first, for the duck walk in the Denny's. But when you're changing the weights between each like category, right, so you obviously have all the novice categories and the open categories, men and women. And right, so it's a lot of different weight changes. And so the weights that they posted required a lot of change plates to get them exact. Man, that takes a lot of time. So in the end, they were just like, throwing on 40 fives, right. So and, to be honest, I don't blame them for but yeah, no, totally. Yeah. Which is like I completely understand but like, so the weights that we lifted, were not the weights that we were told we would lift in the first instance. So in the for the duck walk, particularly the the weights were heavier than than they will post it. But again, it's just like, you know, sort of, I understand why they did that saves a lot of time easier if easier for the event staff and

so it's just like but then actually probably got worse for the the open super heavies, because they just kept on me like, well, it's another weight category up. So I'm go more 40 fives and there were just a lot of 40 fives on by then. But yeah, so again, all that stuff is sort of understandable. But I was was expected and therefore didn't, didn't, didn't didn't mess me up.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:14:36

Yeah, and everyone for motor standpoint is you're dealing with a whole bunch of people and you can't get people out there lifting a friggin midnight either. You know, it's like you have to get stuff done within a certain amount of time. And the reality is, they're all doing the same implement, they're competing against each other. So it's not like it's an unfair advantage to one person or or the other. It's just not necessarily what was posted, which, again, is pretty common. So Cool. So what are you trying to know? Are you gonna do it again?

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:15:04

Yeah, I think so. But that's the goal at the moment. I've tried mainly training for beach season.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:15:13

There you go. Just warm enough where you're at?

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:15:16

Yeah, yeah. And got a bit shaky, not not that the beach is really just trying to lean out a bit after I think I gained 15 or 20 pounds in the nine months, you were training, you know, nice, both muscle and, and fat. So just trying to lean out a little bit the next couple of months and then start started again. That's, that is a lot of fun last year, and yeah, so hopefully do the same thing, again, do the same competition next year.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:15:41

Do you have any idea if that was probably about your normal amount of let's say, muscle in that percentage that you would have had? Or do you feel like it's a little bit maybe higher, and maybe that's because of the training or because of the calories or that type of thing?

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:15:57

So I definitely noticed, areas where I like, because of the difference in the training where I gained a fair amount of muscle, you know, even you know, even being a, you know, a relatively advanced trainee compared to most people. And I think particularly, in my back, a lot of a lot of the the rowing stuff was, you know, I mean, obviously done plenty of rows and pools and that kind of stuff before, but just like the nature of them, the volume of them. I think that I think my back is probably where I gained the most definitely noticed that. And then also, again, that translates really nicely to the deadlift, again, I'd like for the first time like feeling quite stable in my back when deadlifting when before that was maybe a weak area I hadn't addressed. So there definitely, there was some good muscle gains, particularly in areas that that hadn't received much attention previously. So I certainly noticed that.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:16:54

Yeah, and also, for even just general competitors, even especially strong man, I tend to have some you probably noticed in your program, there was some type of back stuff Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Yeah.

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Dr Tommy Wood 1:17:09

As probably, you know, in general, right. If you're, if you're somebody just goes to the gym to lift weights for like your focus a lot on the front. And not necessarily always on the back. Like, you know, it's important, but it's not not necessarily always, you don't always pay attention. And actually, one thing I didn't really appreciate, again, was how important the back and particularly that like the biceps and the biceps tendon area, like that sort of crook of your elbow. Like literally everything we did, I feel like put stress through that. But again, then when you actually get to try to pick up an atlas stone, you realize why, why that's so important. And again, I was another thing I hadn't really appreciate about strongman was how important it was to be, like, like, have be really sort of strong and have some kind of resilience in that in that area. Because like pretty much everything seems to put stress to that area, when you try to pick it up.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:18:04

Yeah, and that's an area that I think is if there's risks involved in strongman, the two biggest risks I see are potentially low back stuff, and then just bicep tears, right. And bicep tears normally come from tires. So people will come in, they'll go underneath, and they'll put their palms up. And they're, they're normally okay, because they probably can

generate enough concentric force. But if they slip or the tire starts coming down, it's their reaction to want to try to stop it by using your biceps. You're not going to win, right at best, your hands will hopefully slip away, but you can blow your bicep there, or especially in stones, because at the bottom position, you're in such a lengthen, extended position that once you start moving and flexing there add more of a risk there too. So yeah. Cool. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate you sharing all your time here. And if I know you generally don't want to be found, but if people want to follow your ramblings or whatever, is there an Instagram or somewhere else they can check you out?

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:19:02

Yeah, come to at Dr. Tommy word on Instagram. I'll sort of my posts are sporadic. But they used to be something in in my stories, at least, the training, or, or posting pictures of my dogs often happens. And then every once in a while on my main feed, there'll be some some either, like some science or some thoughts about the world sort of pop up intermittently. Yes, that's probably the best place

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:19:30

and then you've got Vance blood chemistry course with their buddy, Dr. Ben house, also correct.

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:19:35

Yes. Advanced blood chemistry for athletes we do through our company, Ben's company bro research, and and the moment we're doing so if you've if you've done that you'll get access to these but we're doing sort of like monthly. Almost like a journal club like well, we'll get a paper that we think is interesting. People will find interesting and we'll sort of like dive into it. rip it apart. There's one paper we're going to do in a couple of weeks that just made Ben so angry that he Just wanted to essentially run about it and record a video for people. So that I mean, the the blood cam course i think is now like 40 or 50 hours of content.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:20:11

That's crazy.

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:20:12

And it's very well done. Thanks. And I think it's I think it's super useful. And yeah, so so if

people just want to get really nerdy about that stuff, I mean, it's just, it's just every slide is a new is a different publication or paper. So So yeah, if you're like getting nerdy about that stuff, that's a great place to go. Cool.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:20:32
Awesome. Well, thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it. And like for more Alena stuff in your training coming up?

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:20:39
Yeah, I'm really looking forward to it.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:20:43
Let me know if you want to do that 5k goal?

D Dr Tommy Wood 1:20:45
Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, for sure.

D Dr. Mike T Nelson 1:20:50
Thank you so much for listening to the podcast today. Really appreciate it. Big thanks to Dr. Tommy wood. For all the great work all the excellent training he did, showing up at the strongman event competing for a novice, he did really good. So that's awesome. And I hope you enjoyed this programming episode. I feel like at this one, I should give some shameless plug for my mp3 online training program. But right now, I don't have any spots open. So if you want more information, I will leave it to you to figure out how to get more information if you're really determined. usually have a couple of people graduate here and there. But if you're really determined, you can maybe find a way to contact me and I'll see if I'm still on a waitlist or not. But I guess no shameless marketing plug here for that. But you can find me if you want. All the concepts that we use here are similar to ideas that I teach in the physiologic flexibility course, and also the flex diet certification. I do run a flex diet and mentorship program. Right now, I've only been doing that about once per year. So the one this year is already booked. And then one next year will start possibly in January. And it's in the mentorship that I go into detail on how to program exercise, more of the testing, the assessment protocols, all that kind of stuff, in addition to some business things personal development mindset. And I break down the whole business model I use there also. But right now, that's also full too. But be on the lookout maybe later this year, if

you are interested in that, in the meantime, to get notifications on anything or if I do happen have any openings for the M three online, one on one program, hop on to the newsletter, because that's where I would send all the information out first. So go to flex diet, calm, LXDT calm, you'll be able to get onto the waitlist there. And that'll also put you on the newsletter, where I send out lots of great free information, how to get better performance, better body composition, based on my experience, and also have a fair amount of research in there too. So flextight calm is the place. Thank you so much for listening. I really appreciate it. If you enjoyed this episode like any of the other ones, please share it around or give me a shout out on the old interwebs I've been doing more stuff a little bit on Instagram now. You can find me there at Dr. Mike T. Nelson at Instagram. So that's dr EMI k e t and e l s o n. Thank you so much. Talk to you soon.