



Episode 22 Transcript

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Lee Constantinou, The Relentless Competitor

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Hey, everyone. Welcome here to *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast*, I'm your host Nick Collias. Heather Eastman, an editor and bodybuilding insider...

Heather Eastman: Yes.

Nick: ...is there next to me, and over to my right we've got a man fresh off of competition, off of photo shoots, off of doing a Facebook Live workout on Bodybuilding.com's ... in the gym here yesterday, and he was even up at 5 o'clock this morning training chest with Kris Gethin!

Lee Constantinou: Yes, I was.

Heather: Yeah I saw that on-

Nick: How are the 'chesticles' feeling at the moment.

Lee: They're feeling alright. I had a short nap after.

Nick: Oh, that's the way to do it.

Heather: Oh, you've already got your rest in.

Nick: He is [Lee Constantinou](#), WBBF pro, [\[Team\] Bodybuilding.com athlete](#) and we invited you here because we just wanted to ask one question. Who would win in a fight between you and Kizzito?

Lee: Well, considering Kizzito is a bit of a martial art expert, you know-

Nick: You're a karate black belt.

Lee: I am a karate black belt, yes.

Nick: I think it'd be a good fight.

Lee: Yeah, five years-

Heather: I'd pay to see that. Yeah.

Nick: But I ask you that because you and Kizzito both started off as very serious martial artists and then transitioned into bodybuilding, which, I found to be kind of an interesting trajectory. And I was wondering ... you know, it doesn't seem like it's just a different thing, it kinda seems like, from what I've hear you talk about its kind of an extension of the same thing. In its own way.

Lee: Yeah, definitely is.

Nick: Tell us about that journey.

Lee: I don't talk about my martial arts a lot actually, which is quite nice to actually be asked about it, because if it was like it was once upon a time, but it's very much the things that I learned through my karate practicing that has made me a better bodybuilder through the discipline. You know, like, we used to have to line up in rigorously like dead-straight lines. I was doing that from 13 years old and you had to be square onto the person in front of you and to the person to the right, and those little things that we used to do just made you very structured and disciplined within yourself. Standing up straight, being very aware of your surroundings, and everything that I learned through, see the physical training as well, which is very intense. You couldn't drink water, which is a kind of old Japanese tradition.

Nick: Like during training?

Lee: Yeah during training, no water for that hour or two hours if it was a two-hour session. Which you know at the time you do because that's what you've been told by the sensei, but-

Nick: What about BCAAs in this?

Lee: Water, yeah. Yeah supplementation is probably still in there. They haven't reached that level. But, you know, it taught me a lot of those personal skills that have made me better as an individual. Made me more self-aware, disciplined, focused, you know, setting goals and achieving them and so, coming into the bodybuilding was kind of an extension of my karate.

So I came into bodybuilding to look better essentially, because I was doing karate, I was losing loads of weight, but I wanted to look better as well. I was watching movies, you know, with Van Damme and Bruce Lee and I was like, I want to look like a fighter as well as be a fighter and so that was why I got into the bodybuilding-style training—to make me stronger and then slowly it transitioned and I became more passionate for the bodybuilding aspect and the aesthetic training and the strength I was gaining.

And it reached a point of diminishing returns, by that once I was getting bigger my karate wasn't able to meet ... you know, I wasn't able to train with the same level, because you need to have that elasticity and that strength, and so kind of reached a point that I was, you know, top of my level of karate. Competed at university, went to European championships and I was like the top of my game and then almost within like 12 weeks, straight after my final year of university when you know we did the university championships and we won several medals as a team and individually I was like I'm doing a bodybuilding show.

And then that's when it became all about the bodybuilding aspect of my training and then my eight years of karate had stopped kind of because I had graduated from uni and I was like going back home, getting back into normality and bodybuilding is something you can do wherever you are. You know, there's no schedule of classes. You just turn up to the gym and you train and it was more sustainable and something I could get more into and that just became my focus. So yeah, karate has definitely shaped the way I've become as a bodybuilder in the discipline, the focus, the ... all those things you learn from being a karate practitioner or martial artist in general I've transitioned and made me a better bodybuilder as a result.

Nick: Initially did you research how your favorite martial artists trained with weights? Because I've looked at a bunch of Bruce Lee's old weight routines, they're bodybuilding routines. Really, like, some of those guys are light bodybuilders, as well.

Lee: Yeah I remember I didn't come across a lot. There wasn't lots of, you know, resources on the martial arts at the time. Obviously, Bodybuilding.com's been around since I started training, the early years, but there's no specific things around what they did. I remember seeing Bruce Lee doing pull-ups and pull downs for his lats. So, that was-

Nick: Terrifying lats.

Lee: Yeah, exactly, this kind of vacuum he used to do and, you know, Van Damme ... and they used to do a lot of like old traditional training with like Japanese ... especially the Japanese karateka who use like wooden, they used to use like clay pots and pick them up and walk with them and do really traditional things and they used to actually have this set up in their garden of, I can't remember the name of it, but it's basically like this pad that you dig into the ground and you punch it [inaudible]. So they had these very old school methods, which I couldn't do many of and I didn't really come across a lot of the, what they did, to get like that.

I gathered that they did a lot of bodyweight training like pull-ups, and dips, and stuff. You know, Van Damme as well, he was probably the one who I really aspired to from his physical shape, and just seeing what he did in the movies was kind of enough to get the idea that what he did was more than just the martial arts.

Nick: Sure, but there's more splits in there as well, than anybody wants to do.

Lee: Yeah, I wish I had that hip flexibility to do what he could do, but I never had it.

Heather: Yeah, you, I just watched your pull-up video that we have on Bodybuilding.com and you, I have to say, you have one of the best pull-up forms that I've ever seen. You actually keep ...

Lee: She says that to everybody though.

Heather: Yeah, and not to fan girl out on you, but no, and you also mentioned at one point when you were a kid that you felt like you weren't very coordinated in sports and so can you kind of tell us a little bit about that transition you made? I mean you said you lied about your age to sneak into the gym and work out with your older brother. So, at what point did you kind of say, "Okay, this is where I fit, this is where I belong?"

Lee: It's really interesting actually that you say that because, when I ... so as a kid in sports and athletics, like I said, I never had that natural ability to run with the best coordination, to shoot hoops with the best skill, or kick a ball, because football's sport—soccer's really popular back home, and I just didn't have that hand/eye coordination with sports like that, and when I got into karate I just became really good because I must have had a really good self-awareness of where my body positioning was. Or how to-

Nick: And it'll teach it if you don't have it.

Lee: Exactly, and how to do things and I was encouraged by my teachers for my ability to do what we call kata, which is kind of like a pattern or a dance where you do a sequence of moves. I was good at remembering them, I was good at performing them, and doing them to a higher standard than the grade I was, and I think through being able to know where my body positioning was and what felt right and what looked right, because I watched them back and I would do competitions.

It made me better at executing exercises as a bodybuilder and become more conscious of how I'm doing things because I was aware that if I do it incorrectly it won't serve the right purpose or work the right muscle group and so I've become a bit of a technique freak in that I want to do things properly from doing things properly as a karate practitioner and now as a bodybuilder, and so I will ... I guess it's kind of a bit of a natural ability to see, especially in other people as well as myself, what looks right from doing it for many years.

You know, from being 15 years old, going to the gym, learning literally from doing nothing to, you know, watching a few dudes in the gym pick up the weights and go, okay, that's how you do that exercise and that's how you do that and then slowly experiencing it for myself and then I found watching it back had always been a real helpful tool to make my form better.

Nick: So you mean videos?

Lee: Videos.

Nick: I mean you constantly videoed yourself?

Lee: Yeah, but I never shared it. I wish I did at the time because, it you know, social medial wasn't a

big thing then-

Nick: No, that's a great skill, a lots of coaches say even if you don't share it with anybody, just watch it and maybe even share it with somebody who you ... their feedback you would trust.

Lee: Exactly and I had my brother as well who would, you know, watch over me and we would check each other's form, and it did come with a few injuries and learning through not wanting to get that same injury is what makes you not want to do that same thing incorrectly again. Or seeing a muscle imbalance, so the example you gave of the doing the pull-up, for years I would pull up and kind of round my shoulders forward as most people naturally want to do, until I discovered that to actually work the lats and looking at the biomechanics of the movement and the way the muscle is shaped it was more efficient to do it in the way I now do it. And that's the kind of application that I've had with all the other exercises. Particularly the big ones, you know the compound exercises, which people struggle with mostly. Just fine tuning, which suits me and how I need to lift for my body, but also being aware for clients as well.

Nick: Right, yeah, because you're a personal trainer. I imagine this could help you a lot there but also help you posing on stage-

Lee: Massively. So yeah, I've actually ... which nobody really knows this, I haven't shared this, my first two ever bodybuilding shows in the U.K. the BMBFI, I not only won my categories but I also won the overall presentation for posing in the whole show, against the senior men and everyone-

Nick: Guys who've been doing this a lot longer.

Lee: Exactly, and that was like, wow to me, because I didn't just win my first show, I'd won the posing presentation, which, I made up myself with a bit of music and that for me was quite cool to win something that I didn't even intend on doing, and then do it again for a second time, and that awareness of how to move my body and flex and stuff has definitely helped my lifting as well, because I posed a lot when I was doing the natural bodybuilding.

You know you have to flex your legs, your back, everything at the same time and after every show you'd get these crazy DOMS like you'd had a full body workout. Very different to doing like the fitness model or the physique posing because, you know, you're not flexing everything and that muscle connection made me better at lifting in the gym.

You know, I really do, I know a lot of guys and bodybuilders talk about the mind/muscle connection and bringing out detail with posing in a bodybuilding way, but it really does allow you to connect better with muscle groups that you struggle to connect with, and so, if you ... like most people can't flex their legs, right, especially if it's their first bodybuilding show, and so by doing months and months of flexing and kind of squeezing through your feet and contracting the quads I was able to better contract them during my training as well and then they grew as a result.

Nick: So this first show, because you've competed a lot now. So this first show that you won. What was that prep like in hindsight? Was it just sort of a, flying off the cuff preparation, you did all yourself or did you have a plan or how hard was it?

Lee: It's quite interesting, my first prep, so a friend of mine at the time he was my training partner at university. Michael, and he competed as a teenager two years prior to that, and we were training at

the same gym in North London and that's how I knew of him and I knew this guy who'd competed and he was like super lean and you know I aspired to that because I was two years young, one year younger than him. And then we happened to be in the same academic year at university in West London, which is very rare and I know, for something to happen, but you know everything happens for a reason, and so we ended up being training partners in our final year of university.

And he entered the junior competition, as it was an Under 23 category, and he said I should as well, and I laughed it off, I was like instantly this a possibility. I cannot physically do that. I was training for karate like five, six days a week. Burning lots of calories, trying to make a weight for karate, which, kind of was counterintuitive to trying to body-build and so I had, we basically followed ... I followed his diet, and bearing in mind he was about 10 kilos heavier than me-

Nick: To the gram.

Lee: To the T, to the gram, and I remember it, it was 60 grams of oats for breakfast, made with water, which is porridge or oatmeal whichever you want to call it. We call it porridge by the way. I know you guys are laughing when I say porridge, oatmeal, and then six egg whites, and a protein shake, and then five meals of which are 220 grams of white potato, 100 grams of broccoli, and 220 grams of uncooked chicken, and that was it.

Heather: 220 uncooked and then-

Lee: Five times a day.

Nick: The same meal five times a day for, 12 weeks?

Lee: The same meal five time a day for 12 weeks.

Heather: Which, is surprisingly effective-

Nick: Is it?

Heather: If you just, yeah, if you just do the same thing over and over you stop having to think about it, it's-

Lee: It was, so then, so it was effective in that it got me lean enough to win, but it eliminated food groups, which I found cause me to have some, what's the word I'm looking for, some-

Heather: Deficiencies?

Lee: Deficiencies, one, yeah deficiencies, but also building up some intolerances, so I, cause I didn't have dairy for so long, dairy became a problem when I first had it after the 12 weeks because my body was like what is this?

Nick: Right, you don't have the enzymes anymore, or something. Yeah.

Lee: And so I got bloated very easily from taking on dairy and so I ... if you do come off taking something out the diet you have to really introduce it slowly. Otherwise, your body's under shock, and so that was not ideal for me. But I guess, you know, the diet that we had worked, more so for

me, probably because I was at a leaner state than him. My activity levels were higher, significantly, because of the karate, and I actually got pretty lean considering the diet wasn't set for me, and it had no consideration for macros or calories, but, I must have been in a deficit, and enough to lose body fat and so, yeah, it wasn't the worst diet but it wasn't the best diet, and it wasn't the most sustainable.

Because after that show, which was a 12-week prep, we ... he said to me, "we can have two weeks off now," because we had the British finals in 10 weeks. We can have two weeks off training, and we don't have to be on the diet. So that was my first opportunity to eat like an animal. Which put me back by two, I put on a stone and a half actually in those two weeks, which is about, well there's 14 pounds to the stone, so, that's-

Nick: So that's a solid 20 pounds.

Lee: So it's 20 pounds in two weeks. I was a mess, you know, bloated, retaining a lot of water, accumulating a lot of body fat, and then I went on this kind of low-carb keto diet style, which had again no consideration for macros but it was just eat loads of protein and have some fats but super low carbs. And I pulled it in within the eight weeks but what I found was I lost a lot of muscle tissue in that time, to kind of get back to that level of definition plus a bit further for the show, and I sacrificed muscle tissue. Purely because my body, which I now know is sugar burner, my body prefers carbohydrates as a fuel source, and I was doing a lot of weight training and high intensity stuff and the training wasn't matching up with the diet.

And when you train with that way if your body prefers carbs you will burn into tissue and so I, you know, I came in super lean and dry for the show, but small. And it-

Nick: It was relatively high volume training that you were doing, then?

Lee: Relatively, yeah, so like-

Nick: So I imagine that being a little bit more carb-friendly.

Lee: Yeah, exactly, and so the protocol I was following was cardio every single morning for an hour, fasted, at 6 am and then weights at 4 pm—five, six days a week with HIIT following that cardio session. So, I was just training like an animal. I lived to train at this point. I was a full-time bodybuilder, I'd just graduated from uni, I had, I was working in a health supplement shop two days a week and so the rest of my time was bodybuilding. And in that eight weeks I got that result but I burnt out.

After that six months of my first show prep, I was so burnt out and life was like ... I was exhausted. It was September time and then once again being on the low carbs, as soon as I touched carbs I blew up. Within three weeks I'd put on two stone, which is 28 pounds. I was like rock bottom, you know, I wasn't happy with the fact that what I had attained has so quickly been reversed, because I didn't have a plan post show. I didn't have a plan of how to come out of this diet strategically and because of what I put my body through to get there. The lower carbohydrate, the super high intensity training, the volume, the frequency, and going from that to cutting back to five sessions, four sessions a week wasn't enough. It was too much too soon.

The next year, I was coming back to do the same show, because I wanted to win the British final, I

came third that year that I was burnt out, and I was like, I need to find a better way to do this. I don't want to eliminate foods and I don't want to restrict myself. And so I had a guy who had just won the British Natural Bodybuilding pro card that year, guide me, because he had done it really successfully, he looked great on stage, he didn't seem to eliminate foods in his diet and he guided me through the prep, which had more variety. I ate fruit that prep. I did a lot more HIIT training though with him, so it wasn't as much do like low intensity, it was do more HIIT training but eat more carbs.

So I was doing this high carbohydrate, 400 gram daily intake, but getting leaner, and my body preferred that. And although I was younger, I could take the high intensity training, the carbohydrates was keeping me going, keeping me fueled and keeping my muscle mass most importantly, for this prep. And I looked good and I was happy and I ended up winning the British Junior title from that preparation on the higher carb diet. So great, you know I found a new approach, and I've done three different preps, you know three different experiences.

But then there was always more, I've always wanted to be, like, there must be a better way than this. There must be a way of not having to do cardio till the end of time and there must be a way of eating a little bit more freely, and flexible dieting was coming to light at this point. People were starting to talk about it a bit more. It was 2011, so it's several years ago now. And then I was like, I looked into it, I read into it, and I was like how are these guys eating pop-tarts and getting shredded? That was the curiosity, that was the big thing at the time, and it was like how can I eat crap and get away with it?

So my first flexible dieting prep was for a WBFF show where I would deliberately fit in processed foods, and junk food, because I was allowed it. Right, this was a revolution to me. I'm allowed to eat these things and I can get leaner, and so I did the prep and had these kind of silly bowls of yogurt and pop-tarts and whatever I could get away with at the end of the day. On top of a decent amount of good food.

But, that wasn't the best way either for me because it was like I was starting to use food ... I was becoming food-focused because I was looking forward to this bowl of junk at the end of the night, kind of thing-

Nick: Right, yeah, that's easy to get into, I imagine.

Heather: Yeah, it's a drug.

Lee: And it's sugar, right, and sugar's addictive, and once you have a bit of it you want more of it. And so although I was able to get relatively lean, I didn't get quite as lean because I didn't give myself enough time. That approach, it worked in that I know you can lose body fat on it, but from a health point of view, and from a sustainability point of view, and from a food relationship point of view it wasn't the best approach. And so, ever since that time, now I've been more aware of the flexible dieting. I've just used it to my advantage to eat healthier and more variety and not eliminate foods and that is kind of where I'm at right now. Kind of eating a healthy balanced diet. Not limiting and not cutting out foods and that's been able to give me preps which are more sustainable and I'll finish the show like I just did and feel like life isn't any different I'm just eating a little bit more, and I'm happier.

Nick: I know it's ... At any point in there, after that first, second, third, fourth prep you could have said, "Alright that's it I'm just, I'm done competing, this is too hard. This experiment is just it's too

much," but you keep coming back. What is it about that process that just fascinates you enough to keep you coming back over and over again?

Lee: Yeah, so, this coming, the show I just did in Sacramento, would've been my tenth competition in six years, which sounds crazy for someone whose 27, and people go you've in doing it for a while, and I have. But what it is that draws me back is the learning from the different experiences and the not knowing of what's going to happen in four month's time. Because, you cannot have a clear run for three months, four months, and say I'm gonna do this show prep and nothing's gonna get in my way.

Life has, throws curve balls, and things come up and you have to kind of roll with it and I kind of have been embracing those things that come up and those responsibilities that come with growing up with bodybuilding, and have certainly made the experiences a little more challenging, because I'm not devoted to bodybuilding as I used to be. I'm trying to live a life and trying to train clients, trying to build my business at the same time now. So there's more things going for me and that makes the preps a little bit more challenging but it also, more enjoyable, because it's not my life. It's become and aspect of my life, rather than consume my life.

Heather: Right.

Lee: And what draws me back is seeing those improvements that I'm striving for from the training that I'm doing. So I'm training with the intention of building muscle every time I walk in the gym. I'm not somebody who gains muscle easily so the time to put myself to the test is when I strip body fat down and get on the stage and present myself. Like that's truly the time I see the difference. I can't ... I take measurements and I check my weight but it's only when I really get on that stage that I can really see improvements that I've made. And it's when I can see those improvements myself, other people can see it, that I get that satisfaction that what I am doing is on the right path for what I want to ... what I see myself as achieving and becoming. Rather than the placing that I've got.

And so although recently I just came second in the men's physique show I was super happy and like one of the happiest I've ever been coming not first, purely because I was really happy with the physique that I brought to the stage and the preparation and how everything came together. Being in the US, out of my comfort zone. Preparing my food in somewhere that I hadn't done before and it was all very different, but rewarding for me to see, you know-

Heather: Yeah, it was almost like you set yourself up with this series of challenges. You were flying half way around the world, in a new city, and, yeah that's great that you're, that ... and you're competing kind of with yourself. You're not-

Lee: Definitely, oh yeah, because, you know, as you guys probably know, there are a lot of politics in competitions, as well. And you know, you can't dictate that, it's a subjective sport, bodybuilding, and it's always gonna be about somebody's opinion of what they like. And so you can only do your best to bring your best. Once you bring your best self if that's enough on the day, great. If it's not, then so be it, but as long as you're happy with what you've done and you've left no stone unturned during that prep and you don't have any regrets, then that is when you've won. And this year I feel like I've won that battle.

I'm not saying it was perfect, you know, I messed up loads. I had about four or five blowouts, and I was honest, I shared it on my social media. I said, guys look, last night I blew out, you know I ate a

ton of crap and I feel kind of bad for it but I want you to know that I'm normal and anyone whose going through a strict regime process of getting lean you are gonna moments of weakness and it's a matter of facing them head on and sharing them and being honest. Rather than secretly eating and pretending it never happened.

Once I brought it to light and I shared it, it was quite revolutionary for me to have done that because then I was more self-aware and I had a lot more self-control for the rest of that prep.

Nick: And you were probably able to limit the damage at least, right. Like one blow out, how much damage can one blowout take that really versus two, three weeks of, alright, secret blowout.

Lee: Yeah, pretty much. I kind of use it to train harder. It was like you know what, I did that yesterday, I'm gonna lift harder today, I'm gonna push myself that bit more. So psychologically sometimes it kind of helped me in some ways to push my training to a point. And I wouldn't suggest someone does it, but if you are in that position, you know, reverse the psychology of feeling bad and down about it and go do something about it and think of it as fuel to train harder that day.

Nick: Now I've heard coaches and competitors in the past say that just the process of getting seriously lean for a show is just a great thing to go through. Not only for the ritual of it and for everything you learn, but because they find that it makes their bodies incredibly receptive to the muscle gain afterwards. Kind of just going up and down like that. Do you find that after you really dial it in, your body's like alright here we go, time to grow again?

Lee: Yeah, I certainly feel the benefits of eating more, the filling out and getting that life back in you that kind of gets sucked slowly as you get closer to the comp. And so you have more of appreciation for life certainly, because you are kind of picked up again. But I do see the strength gains as well. I mean, I don't ... I'm sure there are significant muscle gains after the show, but it's very insignificant in that you can't see it. You just kind of fill out and-

Nick: And then you go, if only I'd looked like this three weeks ago.

Lee: Yeah, but then you lose a bit of the abs at the same time. It does feel good to get that post-show fill out and coming off a diet whether you are doing it for a show or doing it for yourself does feel good to slowly reintroduce food again because you have a better appreciation for those tastier foods.

Nick: So somebody who maybe is just fresh off of their first show or has that coming up. How do you recommend they come off of that? What are the most important things for somebody to keep in mind after they've really gotten lean training-wise, nutrition-wise, the first time?

Lee: I would say to someone whose just about to compete, within just about four weeks of doing the show, or competing, or reaching that point of transformation is to be very aware of what's to come after. Like have a plan before it comes around.

That was one of my biggest downfalls. It was doing, like getting so focused and laser target towards this competition date that I'd almost not worry or not care about anything else that was to come after it. It was almost like dragging yourself over a finish line, you know what I'm saying? So there's like nothing else, you can't even stand back up. As opposed to jogging over the finish line and being able to do another lap, and that is having a plan after the show. It's being aware that after the show I am

gonna have a little bit of, you know, one or two meals, or a day off, but I need to get back to a structured plan and reintroduce food and my calories very soon after.

To one, get my mind in a good place, but also to get your metabolism firing again. So I'd try and come back to maintenance calories fairly quickly. You know, within a week or two to be eating what your body maintains at. Bearing in mind that you are at a leaner state now, so your body is gonna not be able to take on the same amount of calories it did before, but it can take on more, significantly more, than when you're kind of depleted, just before you get on stage.

So it's about reintroducing calories sooner. Trying to cut down or halve the cardio you're doing within the first couple of weeks. So you're not cutting it out completely, but you're just reducing it down. And what I like to say to clients or people who are coming out of a show is that you've increased your cardio incrementally over the period of 12, 14, weeks. You need to bring it down in a similar fashion, as well, you can't just stop cardio straight away, because your body's gonna be under the shock of not having that expenditure anymore. So we need to taper it down, bring the calories up, and kind of within that kind of two months if you've done a four month prep, let your body come back to a normal state and then slowly increase the calories up from the maintenance into a surplus.

But having a plan is ultimately what it comes down to. How you do that is up to the individual. But it's really about knowing that after the show I need to be prepared for what's to come, because everybody I speak to, clients, I'm like, I tell them listen, you are gonna want ... you're gonna see food very differently after you do this show. You might have not had a food problem before, you might not have craved things, you might not have had a food-focused mindset but you will after the show. That's just what it does to you.

And everybody I speak to, especially when I'm trying to coach clients out of a competition, it's like, it's normal to want these foods that you didn't have during your prep. Allow yourself it, but we need to stay within a plan. We need to have structure. Otherwise if you just go all out, you'll do what I did and gain two stones in three weeks.

Nick: And feel terrible.

Lee: Fell terrible, and life becomes not very great, and I don't want you to feel like that. And so, the advice I give is very much, like four weeks before the show, is like, look you're gonna be ready for the show, let's think about what's to come after that, and be ready for the challenges you are gonna face, because everybody's gonna face them.

Unless you are like a seasoned pro, you've been doing it for 20, 30 years, I think especially the earlier competitors who've maybe pushed their bodies too hard are gonna rebound just like everyone else. So it's being very self-aware that that is very normal, but not letting it consume you.

Nick: So as you've gotten older and more experienced, do you find that the up and down of in-season, off-season, bulking and cutting, has smoothed out at all for you, or are there big steps still there?

Lee: No it's definitely smoothed out for me since having that self-awareness of what could happen if I let myself go. I've got a very medium metabolism so I feel that if I prep I can get leaner, but if I stop prepping and I eat loads I can gain loads of weight unnecessarily.

So I feel like my body is very much in the middle. Some guys or women with fast metabolisms can kind of get away with more food after the show. Guys with slower metabolisms will kind of, can't eat as much, too soon after.

So it all depends on your body type, but I certainly feel that because I've done this many times now, I'm aware of what could be, versus what I would rather, which is to come out of it and do it the healthy way. Get back to a calorie intake, which is sufficient that I feel happy but not gain 20, 30 pounds of body fat unnecessarily, because then I can't do things like shoot for Bodybuilding.com or do fitness-related work where I need to look healthy and fit and that is what it's about.

I don't want to have those fluctuations again. I don't want to bulk and cut. I don't want to be excessive or extreme. Although this is an extreme sport, I don't want it to be an extreme thing that I go through to get there, because it is, it's like super extreme, get to like 6%, 5% body fat then gain 15% body fat. It shouldn't be that, it should be healthy, it should be balanced, it should be kind of something that you do, but it doesn't become like ... you don't look completely different from six months before your show.

Nick: An entirely different person.

Lee: Yeah, it's just not, I don't think it's a good representation of health and fitness, when bodybuilders, or physique pros, or bikini pros, do this crazy bulk and to gain a fraction or two pounds of muscle, because realistically we can only gain a few pounds of muscle a year, if you are kind of more seasoned, and trained and it's like is it really worth having 30 pounds of body fat to gain those two pounds? And is it efficient for your hormones, to gain it? Probably not, because you reach a point where your hormones don't produce as much testosterone because there's too much body fat and then actually its counterintuitive to what you're trying to achieve.

I kind of like to look healthy with the off season and be functional and still be able to do the things that make me feel good like a bit of cardio every now and then. Go to yoga and still feel like I can get into a stretch without my stomach getting in the way. Do all those things that make me feel good, whilst my bodybuilding ... and I'm growing in the off season.

Nick: Sure, well yeah, and you still have decent energy level for your training, too. I watched your session down there yesterday partly because I was training down there at the same time, and this morning watched it again, and it takes a lot of energy to fit that much volume into an hour. Is that, does your training fluctuate like that or do you really just ... is volume the style that you prefer year round?

Lee: No, it's interesting. What we shot yesterday was a workout from my Herculean trainer program, and it was week five of the program. So the first three weeks are more focused on, and this is how I train as well, it's more hypertrophy strength training, so I'm focusing on heavier lifts, lower repetitions, longer rest. So I'm trying to build that muscle density. Then the second three weeks are more higher volume hypertrophy training, so we're cutting the rest down, and going for more reps. So trying to get ... you know target the two muscle types, muscle type fibers. You know, you've got slow switch, the fast switch, sarcoplasmic-

Nick: But in distinct phases.

Lee: Exactly, distinct phases. And so that was an example of a higher-volume training session,

which can also burn a lot of calories for people who, you know, want to feel that pump. Some people kind of like that volume training, where you get the pump and you feel like, you know, fired up. Whereas I actually prefer the heavier lifting for me. I find my physique suits and responds better to lower volume and heavier density training. So training with a five, six, to eight, one RM, you know that helps me maintain muscle, more so than, 20, 30-reps set training, 12 to 15 is like my top end.

Heather: Yeah, it seems like you, more than anyone I've talked to recently, really focus on kind of the other aspects of training that we don't talk about, which are the rest in between the exercises and your rest days and what you're doing outside of the gym, and you're posing, and do you feel that having that kind of well-rounded focus is what's added to your success, and how have you incorporated that into your Herculean trainer?

Lee: Yeah, so definitely having other things that take me away from just bodybuilding has made me a better bodybuilder and coach, because I can relate better to other people who don't make ... this isn't their life. Once upon a time, this was all I lived for, was to look better for the stage, and now I've realized that there is more to life and I'm finding that balance and by doing things like going to yoga, keeps me grounded, literally as well, because it's very much about connecting with yourself internally. You know, I'm in a class full of women and guys who are like yogis and I'm there-

Nick: That's right, you came to one of the ones here once, didn't you?

Lee: I did.

Nick: Oh, I remember that, yeah.

Lee: It was good class.

Nick: We don't do it anymore, it's tragic.

Lee: Really? I did check the calendar to see who did it. But I enjoy trying things like that, you know. Three days out from my show I went to a yoga class in Sacramento and I felt really good for doing that because that ability to stretch and open up the muscles and the joints increases the blood circulation, which helps your recovery. You know lowers your cortisol levels, which can help you build muscle and burn fat, so it's like these little things that you do outside of the gym contribute to the gains you make in the gym.

And the ability to move with better range of motion, which you can use more, build more strength, more power, and obviously build more muscle. So I can, whenever I go to yoga on a Sunday, and I train on a Monday, like a push workout where I'm doing the bench press. My shoulder mobility is so much better than when I've missed the yoga on a Sunday. And I can really feel the difference, purely from what the benefits of doing that style of training and that's made me do more of that style of yoga, because I can see the benefit immediately in my training the next day. And it doesn't affect your ability to build muscle. If anything it gives you more length and more range so you can build better quality muscle. And-

Nick: And it also give you that bodily awareness you were talking about earlier. Being able to control things, know where your body is in space, yeah, your form has to be better as a result of that.

Lee: Yeah, definitely, and you just feel better in yourself when you move better. When I've been 205

at my heaviest or, no, 210 at my heaviest I just felt horrible. I couldn't feel functional. I didn't feel fit, I didn't feel healthy anymore. I just kind of could push some heavy weights but that wasn't enough, I didn't feel fully satisfied. So finding that balance and doing these other things, certainly make me feel happier and healthier, and more energized.

Nick: Do you find that it helps cut down on the amount of time you need to spend doing the warm up, warm up, doing all this mobility stuff that you see people doing in the gym before they can cram themselves under the bench press?

Lee: Actually no, I still have my routines, I'm still quite big on the mobility warmup. I get on the foam roller, most sessions and I use a lacrosse ball or trigger point ball and I get really into those acute areas that are naturally tight and then there's a bit of dynamic stretching.

So I've got a bit of a format that I like to follow, and it kind of helps me mentally prepare for the workout. If I just jump onto a flat bench with a bar I don't feel like I've mentally prepared for the workout. I feel like I need to do those routinely things before I go to event start lifting a weight. Just because, it gets everything aware, the nerve endings start firing up, your muscles become awake, you become very tuned into what you're about to do.

And because I train quite early, I train like after some clients in the morning, in the same gym, so I'm not changing the environment so I need to very quickly change my mindset to be a bit selfish within that hour, because it needs to be about my training and what I'm doing with my body. So I do my warmup routine to get myself kind of tuned into what I'm about to do. Get the headphones in and kind of hit the workout from there.

I find it helps me, improves my ... especially on leg day, my squat depth, the strength prevents injuries, cause I've had a few injuries last year, which were horrible. Like I pulled my QL, from ... yeah it was really horrible feeling, just kind of dull ache in your lower back. I was like, you know what, I don't want this again, let me do something about it and mobility became a bit more focused for me from the end of last year. Yeah I kept it up.

Nick: Well if you want to go see this, the workout you did yesterday, we'll like to it underneath this episode. And you have another [back and biceps workout](#) on our-

Lee: I do, more of a heavy strength style-

Nick: Okay, so those phases. Both phases are-

Heather: Yeah, he's got a chain around his neck...

Nick: Oh, that's right I remember that one.

Heather: It's now my screen saver.

Nick: Well, Lee Constantinou, thanks so much for coming and talking with us.

Lee: Thank you for having me-

Heather: Yes, thank you.

Lee: I've really enjoyed my time here in Boise and thank you guys and good luck with everything.

Nick: And the program that you book is called Herculean, right. It's all oblique things where you're leaning or its just pure oblique training-

Heather Eastman: One-legged.

Lee: Herculean is kind of like something that I wanted to create from my, all the experiences I've had. And it kind of embodies and it kind of it is what I feel what my training is. It's not about being not just lean but like this character of strength and courage and that's what the program that I created, which is all around that, and I create my group of Herculean heroes in my private community. You know, I'm trying to encourage people to overcome their barriers all their obstacles to become their better self as well through training and lifting weight and through the program, and that's Herculeanebook.com, if anyone's interested.

Nick: Alright, so check it out. Thanks very much.

Lee Constantinou: Thank you for having me.

Nick Collias: Been a pleasure.

So here's the thing. During the month of July 2017, we are participating in the annual "People's Choice Podcast Awards" and we're asking for our listeners to nominate *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast* for an award. Here's the deal: Go to PodcastAwards.com between July 1st and 31st to nominate the show in categories like People's Choice, Health, and Sports and Recreation. The ceremony will happen on International Podcast Day, September 30th, and you can spread the word on social media by using the hashtag #PCA17.



LEE CONSTANTINOU'S LEAN STRENGTH WORKOUT

The good news: You get lots of rest between sets on Bodybuilding.com Team Athlete Lee Constantinou's lat and bicep workout. The bad news: You're going to need it.