



Episode 34 Transcript

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Hard-won Life and Lifting Lessons from KC Mitchell

Nick Collias: Welcome to *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast*, just in time for Halloween or whenever the hell this comes out. We have a monster hanging out in the boardroom with us today, KC Mitchell, a.k.a. 'that one-leg monster,' hanging out at Bodybuilding.com today, down in the gym. Have you already been down in the gym this morning?

KC Mitchell: I have not.

Nick: Oh, okay.

KC Mitchell: I look forward to it though. Right after this, I'm down there, yeah.

Nick: He is an Army veteran, speaker, and oh yeah, he competes in open class [powerlifting](#) with just one leg. Thanks for coming.

KC Mitchell: It's exciting to be here.

Nick: I've been following you on [Instagram](#) for a while. I forget where I first encountered you. There's incredible shit on your feed every single day. It's one of those things that once you see it, you're like all right, I got to follow this guy. There's always cool stuff on there, and you seem like someone who kept everything inside for a really long time maybe, and now you're just kind of exploding. You're out there, you know?

KC Mitchell: Absolutely, yeah.

Nick: I was wondering, like the other day, you shared a picture of the inside of this vehicle you were in in Afghanistan when it crossed paths with an IED. I was wondering, you're so positive in this post. You're like, "I'm just so happy to be alive." Was it really hard for you to look back, and could you look at a photo like that a few years ago?

KC Mitchell: Even now thinking about it, you know, it messes with me a little bit, but ... because I hadn't ... I had seen some photos, but I hadn't seen anything of that quality, because when I got hit, it was really early in the morning. It was like 2 a.m., I think, so it was dark outside. Some of the guys that had pictures and stuff, I couldn't really tell. Then somebody got ahold of these photos and said this is your truck. I was like, man. Then once I realized everything ... basically like a flashback for me.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: But yeah, as much as it bothers me to see it, I'm one of those people that I'm like that was what was meant to happen because there's no reason. The thing is for me, there's no reason I should have lived through that. There was no reason that my whole squad should have lived through that, at all. That was a very, very big pressure plate IED that hit my ... very big.

Nick: With the post there's a picture of the crater it created.

KC Mitchell: It was a six and a half feet deep hole and about a 12 foot radius on that thing. They were measuring it up near 1,000-1,500 pound, somewhere in there. We've had IED's prior hit vehicles like that and kill everybody in them.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: So my thing is I'm not supposed to be here. Why am I going to dwell on it? I'm just happy to be here and be doing what I'm doing now.

Nick: Sure. Now there are videos out there where people can learn some of your story, but I wanted to touch on it. Who were you at that point, and who are you now? The way I hear you talk about it, it sounds like two different people.

KC Mitchell: Yeah. Well I was a grunt then. I was an infantryman, airborne staff sergeant. I led soldiers, and I was a wild man. My soldiers loved that about me.

Nick: Cage fighter.

KC Mitchell: I cage fought. Yeah, I started doing that for fun just because it was something I enjoyed doing, I guess. I grew up a wrestler. Then once I got into the military, you start learning combatives and things like that. Then I had met somebody in my platoon that was an MMA fighter, and I went to one training thing, and I got addicted to it immediately. So yeah, I was cage fighting. All my soldiers would go watch me at my fights and stuff like that. Then on deployment, I was a go-getter. I was focused on the mission that we were there to do, and that was to fight and kill the enemy. I was one of the ones that wanted to go out every single time, every single night to do my job, just the way I was.

And so my soldiers they loved that about me. They hated it about me because that means they always had to work, but they loved that about me, and then they trusted me. I'm still that person. I still have that drive and that mentality. I feel like the military's built the way I am now as far as me training and everything like that like I do. It's a mental thing, you know. When you jump out of an airplane, you got 50-pound ruck and a weapon, and they say, "Oh, by the way, you just got done jumping out of a plane at midnight. Now you're going to walk 25 miles back to the barracks." You can be in the best shape of your life, and yeah, you're going to walk it, but the mental part's going to come in when you're at mile 12, and you're like ugh, I'm only halfway, and now it's 5 a.m. or something like that.

So the military and everything like that built the way that I am as far as my mental state, being hard, I guess you could say, and that has definitely come over to play into what it is I'm doing now. I was definitely like that person when I, after I was injured and stuff like that, I was kind of lost. The military was like my career. I had gone in. I had a game plan when I was 19 years old. I'm going to go in, I'm going to retire at 39. Then I'm going to join SWAT or something like that. Then I'm going to retire there at 59. Then I'm going to be 59 years old, still somewhat young, double dipping retirement checks and just living good.

That was a game plan I had. Then it got cut short. When it got cut short, what did I have to offer? Now I have the beat up body, and all I did was jump out of planes and shoot weapons. What can I bring? I can't be a cop because I can't really chase people because my body's so beat up. There's a lot of things I couldn't do. There's nothing I could offer somebody. I couldn't go to certain places like businesses and be like this is what I've done, but I have nothing to follow behind it. I have no résumé. The only thing I had was that I was a leader. That was it.

So I went down some dark paths with myself. I was lucky enough to have a point come in my life to where I wanted to fix myself, and then when I started fixing myself, I realized I could maybe help fix people. So that's basically how this all started. It took one person ... Well it took myself to get myself right, but then it took one person to say hey, "What you're doing, this isn't just lifting," this is just me going to the gym and me not being very good at speaking and putting up videos. To where now I travel all over doing speaking engagements and I go lift.

Nick: So as somebody ... you were a wrestler, you were a fighter, you obviously had some kind of relationship with the gym in the past.

KC Mitchell: Oh, absolutely.

Nick: But, how did you engineer this new relationship? Was there a moment where you were like, "This is the place I need to be?"

KC Mitchell: Well, when I was in the military, I always did the bro gym stuff, curls for the girls, you know, type of thing. Friday night go in there get the pump in before I go out to the bars or clubs and stuff. I was always in shape. I mean, I ran a lot. That is one thing that I don't get to do now because my body's just beat up a little bit differently now. I used to run a lot. My gym sessions were just going to the gym and just working out. I'm actually bigger now than I've ever been in my entire life even when I was healthy. I never powerlifted ever. Wasn't in my realm. Didn't think about it.

Nick: Just like those three lifts?

KC Mitchell: We'd go in there and do chest, bi's, tri's, shoulders, just the basic stuff when I was in the Army. And now ... I didn't really do squats back then. I just didn't. For some reason, I feel like squatting is a huge thing now these last couple of years. I feel like everybody's starting to squat now.

Nick: Powerlifting is just huge.

KC Mitchell: Yeah. Powerlifting is blowing up.

Heather Eastman: Oh, yeah.

KC Mitchell: And you know what, about two years ago, I told everybody, I said "if you're not in the business with powerlifting of some sort, you need to be because it's about to blow up." I mean CrossFit came through, and it was a huge fad. It's still around, don't get me wrong. It was huge. A lot of CrossFitters are going over to powerlifting now.

Heather: Oh, yeah.

KC Mitchell: You know, and I remember doing a little fun CrossFit thing, and it was like there was a deadlift ladder, and I was just there to speak, and then at the end, they were like, "Will you do the deadlift ladder?", and I was like I don't do CrossFit, man. That's not in me. Well, you just do these reps, these reps, and you get up to this heavy one, you do them for one. It's timed. I was like well I can do that, I guess. It was crazy to me to see how many of the ... I mean I beat every CrossFit guy there, because what they couldn't do is they couldn't lift the heavy weight at the end.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: And they were stuck. Me being strong, all I had to do was have somewhat of decent cardio, and I'm going to get through that. But if I'm really strong, and I can just get through those little weights, and those little reps, I'm strong enough to pull that next weight at the very end to win or not. You know what I mean?

So I kept telling a lot of people, I don't know why the CrossFitters are not coming over to powerlifting to get stronger, and then all of a sudden, it started happening. I remember two years ago, now powerlifting is just—everybody's doing it. The thing is with powerlifting though, is I'm a firm believer with powerlifting ... Don't get me wrong. There are genetic freaks. There are out there, Ed Coan, Mark Bell.

Nick: You've worked with both of those guys.

KC Mitchell: I love them. They're awesome. Ed Coan is great. Mark's ... You know Mark.

Nick: He's been on the podcast. He's a great guy.

KC Mitchell: He's awesome. I love Mark. And I've been around all of those guys, and the thing is though with powerlifting, compared to bodybuilding is anybody can get strong. You can be the smallest guy ever, and you can get strong, and you can be a very competitive, elite powerlifter if you want to be. With bodybuilding, you got to have genetics. Your body's got to be built a certain way to be Phil Heath or something like that or to be on that stage. You got to have a genetic package, and

your body's got to be build a certain way. Powerlifting, no. No. If you just work hard. Yeah, there are guys that are going to have to work harder than guys like Ed Coan or Mark Bell and stuff like that. But you can do it.

Nick: They've worked plenty hard, too.

KC Mitchell: What's that?

Nick: They've worked plenty hard, those guys.

KC Mitchell: Oh, absolutely, you know what I mean? But to get to that level. Some people will have to work harder. There's some guys that are going to have to work less.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: There's guys right now that I'm watching come through that are just you're literally, there's guys out there right now, they're watching the Ed Coan of our times come through right now, and it's impressive to see it. Especially for Ed holding those records for so long. But I think that's what people are starting to realize with powerlifting is that they can get stronger. The powerlifting community is just a family, too. Me and you could be like you're number one, I'm ranked number two, and when I'm going out there and I'm about to beat your record, you're cheering me on because you want to see it.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: You want to see it. It's fun. It's a whole different atmosphere than any type of fitness sport that's going on right now. It seems like everybody likes everybody and is together and wants to see everybody do the best they possibly can.

Nick: Do you think the old you looked at that sort of stuff and thought it was kind of boring? Like you're just doing one lift. What's the point of that?

KC Mitchell: Yeah, absolutely. That wasn't something, like I said ... powerlifting, especially back then ... powerlifting, nobody even talked about it. When you thought about powerlifting back then, it's like oh those big fat guys that just ... nobody wants to look like that.

Nick: You get it up any way you can, the ugliest deadlift in the world. Right?

KC Mitchell: And that's how they were. Yeah.

Heather: Yeah.

KC Mitchell: But now you got the genetic freaks coming through that are just ... Jesse Norris, guys like that, that works here, and he's a freak. He looks amazing, you know. Some of these powerlifters now, they're no joke. They could step on a bodybuilding stage in six to 12 weeks, easy.

Nick: That's the thing I'm always amazed by. I look at some of these guys, and yeah ...

KC Mitchell: They're ready.

Nick: Richard Hawthorne, he deadlifts 600 pounds for five reps at like 130 pounds.

KC Mitchell: He's an amazing human being.

Nick: He's amazing. He's a cool guy.

KC Mitchell: I lifted with him for the first time in the Animal cage last year at the Arnold, and that guy don't have to say much, but when he's standing there getting ready to lift, you see tears coming out of his eyes. There's so much passion, so much love.

Nick: That video's amazing.

KC Mitchell: It even gives me chills now thinking about it because I remember sitting there, and it's ... Hawthorne, it's the Ant Man. We all know who he is. Then finally me getting to watch him, and then he is a little guy. He's shredded to the bone, and then just to see how much passion and everything he has. It was crazy to watch.

Nick: It's crazy. He stands over the bar in this video that you can find online really easily, for like five minutes.

KC Mitchell: Yep.

Nick: Just standing there with his eyes closed getting ready for this one five-rep set. It's a pretty mystical looking ...

KC Mitchell: It really is. I've never seen anything like it. And the thing is, it's not fake. You can feel it, and that's how, like I said in the cage last year, same thing. Kind of stood there for a minute before he got wild in there, and you just see tears coming out of his eyes, and I'm just like man, that's some real stuff.

Nick: Yeah, that guy, he's ... Yeah. We do a lot of transformation stories and things on our site where it seems like somebody has a moment where it's like all right, it all comes together, and they make that crucial decision, "All right, I'm going this way, I've got to turn it this way." What was that moment for you? I've heard you talk about Disneyland.

KC Mitchell: Yeah, my moment for me of getting out of that deep, dark hole that I was in which was ... narcotics abuse. I don't want to say I was an alcoholic, but I drank with the narcotics to make it ... To get a high off it, to feel a little bit more numb to everything. Yeah. I sat around literally for a year, played video games, popped those pills, drank beer, ate pizza, and just didn't do anything with myself. Like I said, I felt like I didn't have anything to give. I was bringing in a retirement check finally. I just didn't know what I was going to do with myself.

Nick: The story could end there if you're not careful.

KC Mitchell: That's it. Yeah, absolutely. Then the Disneyland thing. So my daughter's two year birthday was coming up. We wanted to take her to Disneyland. So I mean of course, I love my daughter. I wanted to do that so bad, so I was like yeah, let's do that. Awesome. So we went, and we went and bought a three-day pass. We were going to stay at the Disneyland hotel, which is right on

Disneyland. We had gotten the thing where when she goes in the room, it looks like Mickey Mouse had been in her room. So everything was great. I was very excited about it. I was really excited because I had never been myself. So I was excited. Then the next morning came about, and I have to take pills because I'm in pain. I am in pain, but I also take them because I just need to take them. We head out, everything's great, and I walked a block, and I was in so much pain, my legs, my prosthetic side, my other leg, and I had to sit down because I couldn't walk a very good distance on my leg. That was due to the fact of I'm not doing anything with myself except sitting on the couch all the time. I wasn't built to walk like that because I hadn't got myself up and doing it.

I sat down, and I was in pain, and of course, my wife and daughter, they have to wait for me. We hadn't even made it into Disneyland. If you've ever been to Disneyland LA, you've walked down, there's little cool stores, Rainforest Café, that's where I sat down, right by there.

Nick: Oh, okay.

KC Mitchell: So you know how close that is. That's pretty dang close, about a block. The new had another block to go just to even get into Disneyland. So then we get there to the spot, and then I had to stand in line, and then the pain just starts killing me to stand for long periods of time in line. Then I start getting irritated, start getting angry because then I start sweating. So with sweat, pain, and just everything, a person starts to change in a way, and you're irritable. Then I realized I'm not in a good mood, I don't want to be here, and that I can't like do this. My wife is like, "It's all right, we'll take it slow. We'll go as fast as we can, whatever. We're here for three days. Maybe today we'll do this side, and then next day we'll do the other side, and then the last day, we'll decide on certain ones to go do." So she was trying to get me to stay positive about it, I guess.

So I continued on, and then we just ... I just couldn't do it. Realized that later on throughout the day. I was struggling. My wife said why don't we just go back to the hotel, and we'll just take a nap because my daughter's two years old, let's lay her down anyway. Then we'll go out tonight, that way you can rest your legs a little bit. I was like, "Thanks, okay, let's go." Then we struggled to get back to the room. And then I finally get in there, I take my leg off, I sit down. I'm starting to calm down a little bit. But I'm upset with myself and everything else, and then the next morning, same thing. We start to take off. I walk a little bit further but not as far. We only got through half that day until my wife's like, "Look, this is just too hard on you." That's when it really hit me that we have to leave Disneyland now because I can't walk Disneyland. My wife doesn't want to stick me in the room while her and my daughter go out and whatever, you know what I mean?

So, I don't know. I remember just sitting there and just looking at my daughter and being so mad at myself. Then my wife had took a picture of me and my daughter on my phone, and she's sitting on my lap. She's two, but we had her smiling and stuff, and we had done a lot, like dinner with the princesses and stuff like that and whatever. And is my daughter going to remember that? No. She's not. But I'm going to remember that, and I still do. That was years ago. She's seven now. It was five years ago. I remember every little tiny thing because it haunts me. It haunts me not to be that person again.

So yeah, so basically after that, we were driving home, we packed up, we left early. I felt like the biggest piece of shit you could possibly feel like as a human being, especially as a father. So I was driving home, and I just remember looking at my wife, and my wife didn't really know that I took the narcotics like that. The thing with me is I had an unlimited amount of them. I had no problem getting them. I had a built up stock of them just because I just sometimes I wasn't taking them. So I would

get prescribed them, and I would be in the hospital, so I wouldn't be taking mine at home. I'd be taking theirs there, and then so I just had built up.

Nick: You had a plan.

KC Mitchell: I had plenty of them. At any time, because I was in so much pain, and I was like really messed up, if I went to the doctor and said I need some pain meds, they had no problem giving them to me because I was in pain, but I was taking them a little bit more and a little bit quicker, and then I learned how to take certain ones with certain ones to get more of that ... It had gotten down to a weird point, you know? Could I walk around without them? Sometimes, yeah. It wasn't that I needed them like that, but there were times sitting around at home, or when I would get depressed or something like that, yeah. At that time, I wasn't sleeping very good, and I had flashbacks, nightmares, stuff like that here and there. So me going to sleep, I wasn't excited about going to sleep at all, and I had taken every type of sleeping pill you can imagine to try to help me, and I don't like them. I just stayed up for days. There would be times where I would do three-day bingers, and all I would do is play video games.

The thing is though with the video games was there's a lot of people who are like "Why video games?", and the thing was when I moved back to Bakersfield, I didn't grow up there, I grew up in a city an hour from there. So I had no friends, I didn't know anybody there. The only people that were my friends were these people that I didn't even know that were in my headset.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: That I knew at any given time that they were probably going to be online playing, too, and I knew about what time they were on. Then if they weren't on, there was another group that would come on because of the time difference. So that was like my way of being able to socialize.

Heather: Yeah.

KC Mitchell: You know what I mean? And I enjoyed it because it got my mind off a lot of things. And that's ...

Nick: Just bullshitting like that probably ...

KC Mitchell: All the time.

Nick: ... reminded you a little bit of being in the Army, too.

KC Mitchell: Of course, absolutely. And I don't know. Like I said, those were the people that I could talk to, and they didn't have no judgment. They didn't know me. We were all cool on there, you know? As weird as it sounds, those were my friends at the time, and it helped me get through a lot. I think if I didn't have them, maybe that, maybe I would have been worse. Maybe I would have been taking the pills and killed myself or something unfortunately. I don't know.

But the thing is, after Disneyland, I was driving home, and I felt horrible, and that's when I was like I'm going to change my life now. I went home that night, as soon as we got home, long drive, and they slept, and I looked at them, and I was emotional, and I was mad at myself. As soon as we got in, I just bolted to the bathrooms and to my bedroom, and I got every type, even ibuprofen, every

type of pill that you could imagine, and I got them, and I started dumping them. My wife's like, "What are you doing?", and I'm like I have to get rid of these. I started explaining to her a little bit what was going on and stuff like that and that I was taking quite a bit of them, and I was like they're bringing me down.

At the time, I was like I don't want to sit there and say I was abusing them. I didn't admit it really to her. I just said I want to get rid of them. I want to get off these things.

Nick: Sure. They had a grasp over you definitely.

KC Mitchell: Right, and the thing is with those, I got rid of those, and then I went to the fridge, I got rid of all the alcohol, got rid of all the soda, and as petty as it sounds, I went to the cabinets, and I got rid of Doritos and everything like that, and everybody's like why Doritos, and I'm like that's part of the demon. That's part of everything I was doing, and I want to get rid of it all. Even the minor things sometimes you have to get rid of because it could remind you of something. Now can I go eat Doritos? Absolutely. But during that time, it was a way of me getting rid of everything that was going bad at that time.

Then I went through three days of just some of the worst withdrawals. I mean I cold turkeyed it, and it was horrible, and I was sick, and I was in pain, a lot of pain. I hadn't functioned off pain killers ... Oh, man. Probably three years? People are like, "Three years?", and I'm like yeah, you got to think. I was in Walter Reed hospital, in the hospital for a year.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: I was bedridden for four months straight, and they put me at a little hotel, I mean they call it a hotel. It's right outside the hospital. They help you start living again and learning how to live again. I was in a wheelchair, but every morning when I got up, I was at the hospital until the evening time. So for a year, I lived at Walter Reed, and then I transferred to Balboa where I finished up the other 15 surgeries that I had to go through, and I lived in the hospital there for two and a half years as well, in and out.

Nick: Wow.

KC Mitchell: And every single day, I reported to the hospital. That was my job was to get healthy, physical therapy. For three years, I was on meds and stuff like that. So kicking it was very, very hard. But like I said, the mental part of me was like it's ready ... let's do this, and it was horrible. I think I ate two things of chicken noodle soup and that was about it. I just, I couldn't ... It was horrible. After coming out of that, I never want to go through that again.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: I barely take pain pills now. Well, I don't take any pain pills. I'm talking like an ibuprofen or something like that. My wife has to beg me to take something, and a lot of times I'll just tell her no, and I'll just deal with it, and I've been doing that for some years now.

Nick: You have a different relationship with pain then, it sounds like.

KC Mitchell: Absolutely. Absolutely. The mind is very, very ... is a very amazing thing. Yeah, the

pain that I've ... Okay, for example, when I first started powerlifting, the pressure inside my socket was insane, hurt so bad. When I started [deadlifting](#), I would immediately start pouring sweat because I was in so much pain. That weight doesn't even bother me now at all because I've built myself around it. The mind has gotten ... I guess like this is normal, and I feel like the mind can do that. So yeah, the pain ... I mean there will be times when I'm standing around, and I'm hurting, and I start to sweat a little bit, but I fight it because I know the next time I do it, I'm going to be like already done this. It's the same thing when I was in the military when I say jumping on a plane and ruck marching, you know. First time was 10 miles, the next time was 20 miles, the next time was 25 miles. You know what I mean? Then when they're like oh we're going to do a 10 mile hike, that's nothing. You know what I mean?

That's basically how I've used that military ... like with me and the lifting and the pain and everything else as well. Yeah, the pain has definitely just gone away. Not completely, obviously. I'm in pain all the time. Every morning. I'm in chronic pain every day, all day. But the more that I'm doing things, the more active I am, it's getting better and better and better. The different challenges and obstacles I'm putting myself through, the things I didn't think I was going to be able to and I do them, that really pushes me and motivates me, and I don't really even mind the pain so much.

Nick: Interesting.

Heather: So, your story is unique, but it's also somewhat common in the sense that there's a lot of guys like you that are coming back injured, and they're going through that kind of dark place.

KC Mitchell: Absolutely.

Heather: Talk about just that first few weeks coming back into the gym because I think that's where a lot of people struggle is like, "How do I start, what do I do?"

KC Mitchell: Yeah. So I have this thing with men, we're egotistical dudes. First of all, if you don't have an ego, you're probably not a man, you know what I mean? Because you got to have an ego as a man. That's just the way we're built. When we go to the gym, we're all wanting to be the biggest, strongest, baddest dude in the gym. It don't matter. I don't care who you are. You know what I mean? I got that leave the ego at the door thing, I got that. I do. But the guys that are just starting out, I was there. When I started getting better, and that's when I started going back to the gym. But when I went to the gym, I was so insecure with myself because I was 165 pounds or something like that. So I wasn't the same as I was before I got injured. So that bothered me, one, because now I'm in the gym. I used to be a decently in-shape guy. Now I'm the skinniest guy, the smallest guy, the weakest guy.

Now I'm missing a leg. I don't walk very good. I'm going to have to figure out everything on how to use the equipment again because I don't remember too much of it because it'd been years since I really trained and worked out or anything. It's so funny because so many things had changed from that time, in the three years I didn't work out to when I went in there. So much had changed. Supplementation.

Heather: Oh, yeah.

KC Mitchell: The training styles and everything. So I was new. I went in there, and I wore sweatpants, and wore long shirts and stuff like that because I was just embarrassed. I was insecure

with my leg and everything like that. So yeah, I just started going in there, and the thing is what happens is, I call it ... It's like the first two weeks is the hardest, but I feel like if you can get through those, even after two weeks, you really do start seeing some things start to change. If you're a smaller guy, yeah, you're going to start seeing your body get a little bit fuller because now you've got blood flow going in your muscles and things like that now. So immediately you're going to be like in two weeks, I look better already, and I feel like if you can get through those two to three weeks and allow it to build structure for you, it becomes an addiction. I think that's the struggle where people have to get through is just get through the first two to three weeks.

Especially the first week, go in there and just learn a little bit first. Don't go in there trying to go crazy. Go in there and get the basics down and the form down and things like that. That was one thing I actually wanted to do when I got in there was try to relearn everything again because my mechanics were a little bit different than what they were. But one thing I did notice is when I was walking in there, I did have a little bit of a limp when I walk. I don't limp now. If I wear jeans, people don't know. I used to have a handicap, I don't have it anymore. When I would park, I had this big lifted truck, I put the handicap placard up, and I'd hop out the truck, and I'd take off, and I would come out there, and there would usually be cops up behind my truck and somebody would call, and say this guy just jumped out of his truck and took off, and I'm wearing jeans, so they don't know. Then I have to explain to the cop, no I'm an amputee, and he's like no, and I show him, and they freak out because you just can't tell.

That motivated me a lot to continue training, but what I noticed if I was in the gym, I had a limp, I started carrying around 20-pound dumbbells. Next thing you know, I'm carrying around 40-pound dumbbells. Next thing you know, I can grab 100-pound dumbbells. I'm walking around the gym, carrying 100-pound dumbbells. If I can walk around the gym carrying 100-pound dumbbells, how good do you think my walk's going to be when I don't carry any dumbbells. The core gets stronger, everything gets stronger. That was basically me.

I started seeing everything get a little bit better. I start my cardio started getting a little bit better. My rep scheme started getting a little bit better. I could only do five. Now I can do eight. Now I can do 10. That was in the first few weeks. So yeah, for guys that are just starting out, it'll come. It comes. It's just are you willing to stay in the gym and see the transformation and it doesn't happen quick. In the beginning, I feel like everything happens quick in the beginning, but then you're going to hit that little plateau, and then that's when you take it to another level. Now you intensify everything. Now let's get your nutrition dialed in. Let's really start pushing. But people that are just starting out, just keep going. Absolutely just keep going because it's going to change.

Nick: At that point, was your goal just get in shape?

KC Mitchell: Absolutely. When I went to the gym, it was for me to get in shape, me to be able to go to Disneyland, walk Disneyland. Matter of fact, was it two years later? Maybe three, one year later, I went to Disneyland, I owned Disneyland. My daughter was going to sleep before I was done. I went three days, both sides. I mean I was moving out there in Disneyland. That was all due to me going to the gym and getting myself in shape and getting my body used to being the way it is now and dealing with the pain. Don't get me wrong. When I went to Disneyland and owned it, I was in pain. There was a couple times I sat down here and there, but it was nothing like the first time. I mean I went all three days this time and had one of the best times ever. That was due to the gym. That's absolutely what it was.

When it changed for me to go just the gym to what it is I do now was, I was in the gym one day, and this was when I decided I really want to learn how to [squat](#). So I was trying to learn how to squat, and now I look at them, and I'm like those are the most horrendous squat I've ever seen, now that I look back at them. At the time, I thought they were epic, you know. There was this local bodybuilder in my city, and I asked him for a spot, and I was like hey can you spot me. We're good friends, gym friends, and he's like yeah, what are you going to do, well I'm going to try to free squat today. I haven't been able to do it really too much. I'm going to try to get after it today.

So I started doing it, and then I got all the way up to 315 or something like that, and he was like can I record this, and I was like for what, because I had no social media. I wasn't into it at all. I think when I was doing social media back then, it was like MySpace. I didn't even know what Instagram really, really was. So I was like I guess. What do you want to do with it? He was like man, you don't understand, what you're doing is motivating. I was like yeah, but it doesn't look good at all. It doesn't look good. He was like it doesn't matter. It's the point that you're out there trying. There's guys that won't even squat, won't even do it, and here you are struggling, it hurts, and you're missing a leg and everything else that's wrong with you, and you're trying.

So I was like sure, man, I guess. So he did, and then he showed me it, and I was like that looks disgusting. He said it doesn't matter. He said can I post it on my Facebook. He's in a closed Facebook group thing with all bodybuilders and stuff like that. I was like I guess man, go ahead, and an hour later, he screenshots me this picture of all these people tripping out that I was even motivated, and just saying how awesome it is, and like what's his social media name, where can we find him, and I was like wow.

So he told me, he was look dude, you need to do it, you could motivate some people with this, and I sat around it. I said maybe I'll think about it. Then I started it. It was like ... I don't even remember what the Instagram name was when I first started it. I just started posting some things, and it started growing a little bit here and there. Then a big fitness icon eventually ... Okay, before that. So before all that, I really started getting into fitness, and then when he told me that, I was like I'm really going to try to do this, I guess. So I started going to fit expos, and I was just like everybody else. I stood in line just like everybody else to meet people. I remember standing in a line for two hours to meet Jay Cutler one time. Rich Piana, CT Fletcher, certain people, Dana Bailey. Those are the big people back when I was ... they're still big.

Nick: They're still big.

KC Mitchell: But when I was coming through, they were the pinnacles. They were the beginning of it all, like the social media and the fitness world really to me. I was like standing in line, waiting for people, stuff like that. So that's who I went there to go see. I remember standing in line, getting a picture. Dana Bailey probably don't even remember, but I remember sitting there, and we had these protein donuts with her, and she was prepping, and she wanted that protein donut so bad, and we just let her have it, and she was like maybe I'll get a cheat later on and stuff like that. CT Fletcher, I liked him a lot. I liked his style, just everything about him. He was kind of like me. He has his heart thing. So he had bounced back from it. He was just an animal. I liked his training scheme and the way he was. So I idolized him a lot when I was coming through.

I remember one day I was like I'm just going out to Metroflex. That's when CT and them were there, CT, Mike Rashid, Big Rob and all those guys. I was like I'm going to go there. And I went there, and showed up, and CT Fletcher wasn't there, but Mike Rashid and Big Rob and those guys were there.

I was still at the same point where I was still wearing sweatpants and stuff like that. I'm like not fully comfortable with myself yet. I'm not built real well yet, but I was getting there. I still have the picture on my phone. I still have it because I like to look at it. But I go in there, and I just am tripping out that I see Big Rob and Rashid and all these guys. I see them, and I'm like dang, I know those guys. That's crazy. So I walk up, and I say hey, I'm not trying to mess with your guys' workout, I just want to say what you guys are doing, the way you guys are training motivates me. I love everything you guys are doing.

They were like oh man, we really appreciate it, especially Big Rob. Big Rob's a very nice guy. He's awesome. He's a monster, but he's like the biggest teddy bear ever. He's such a good dude. Then as I'm walking off, he's like hey, you want to work out with us, and I was like really? He's like yeah, man, but if you do, there's no quitting. You're going to finish. You're going to do it. You don't have to go as heavy. It's not about heavy. It's about finishing the workout. I was like dude, that would be awesome.

So I worked out with these guys. Then when I got done, and the whole time we're working out, they have no idea I'm an amputee. They have no clue. But at the end, I'm pretty worn out, I'm pretty tired, and I had this little limp going, so I'm just worn out.

Nick: Squat workout?

KC Mitchell: No. It wasn't. It's just a period of me going like that, standing like that, training and moving around is just ... I get that sometimes. My body's just dragging around a piece of carbon fiber around so it's tiring. Big Rob goes hey man, are you all right, and I was like what, I was like yeah. He goes well you're limping. I was like oh. I was like yeah, I'm good, man. He's like you sure, dude, and I was like yeah. I was like Rob, I'm an amputee, and he was like what, he was like no. And I was like yeah, I'm an amputee, man, and he was like looking around like there's no way, and I was like look, and I pull up my leg, and he goes oh my god.

He goes what the hell, you didn't tell us, and they were getting in me. They were digging into me some. I said what, don't feel bad because I'm an amputee. I don't want your sympathy. I loved that. That was awesome. Then he goes, bro, you got to come outside to talk to Mike before he leaves. Mike's gonna trip. So Mike was sitting in his Tundra with his son, and Rob comes out like dude, this dude is crazy, he's an amputee, and he got blown up in Afghanistan, and Rob's telling him this fast paced stuff, and Mike Rashid looks at me, and he's like dang, dude, really? Like wow, man. I had no clue, mad respect. He goes hold on.

He gets his phone out, and he's like look, I'm going to turn this phone on. I want you to tell the people something, whatever. So long story short, I end up telling Mike, I remember telling Mike because he said what do you want to do, and I remember looking at him and being like I want to do what you're doing. I want to somehow become something in the fitness industry to where I can help and motivate people. I don't know what it is I'm going to do or how I'm going to do it, but I said maybe one day, like I want to do what you're doing, and years later, here we are.

Nick: Wow.

KC Mitchell: Doing it. And Mike calling me and asking if I want to come do video collabs and CT Fletcher and me have shot videos now. It's like years ago, I set that goal out to do that. I just kept going to fitness expos, kept traveling around. That's one thing, all these people are like well how did

you do it. I put 60,000 miles on my car in one year. That was how I did it. I took weeks and weeks away from my family. That's how I did it. I was on the road constantly because I just felt like it was something that I could do. Whether or not I knew there was going to be money in it eventually to help me out with my family or anything, I didn't know. I didn't know what it was going to do, but I knew I wanted to do it, and I knew it gave me purpose, and it was changing my life as I was doing it.

So yeah, I started traveling around, and next thing you know, I had my big break with the fitness industry was Rich Piana came to my home town. He came to a nutrition store. I was the same person just like everybody else, Rich Piana's coming, I'm going to go check him out, this is cool. So I go down there, he's there, and then I'm not one of the ones that gets excited where I'm bombarding him. I just hang out and wait off to the side. The nutrition store is my friend's store, so I'm hanging out and helping him set up booths and doing whatever.

So I didn't really talk to Rich the whole day. But I was wearing shorts at this time. This was by the time I'm pretty comfortable with myself, I don't care anymore. I rock it. Rich ends up asking my friend who owns the store, who's this guy, what's his story, and he tells him everything, and then Rich comes over, he goes after this, you want to sit down and talk a little bit, and I was like yeah, sure, absolutely. So we did. We sat down, and he was the nicest guy ever.

Nick: That's what we hear over and over again about Rich Piana.

KC Mitchell: I mean nicest guy ever. I was really close with Rich before his passing, and I was part of his little nutrition team and all that when I first started, and Rich wanted to see people succeed. The one thing he wasn't about is he wasn't about not seeing people succeed because he was the big guy. He wanted to see everybody do it. That was one thing that he told me. I remember sitting there, and the guy had no reason to, but he said you want to shoot a video, and I was like what. I was like yeah, I'll come down to LA any time, you just tell me when. He was like no, today.

Nick: Do a 12-hour arm workout today.

KC Mitchell: He goes no, today, we'll go to your gym in front of your people, and we'll do something, and I was blown away because the guy just drove from LA for this little meeting thing. Now he's taking even more time on his way up to Sacramento, and he had to drive to Sacramento that day. I was freaked out. I was like oh man, this is crazy. I'm going to shoot a video with Rich Piana. He is one of the biggest ones in the industry. Four hour waits, I've seen it first hand at Body Power in the UK. We gave a kid extra supplements to see how long it took him to get to the front of the line, three hours and 45 minutes that kid waited.

So I remember him, we shot a little video on the couch right there talking about me and everything, and then he said all right, I'll follow you to the gym. So he gets in his car, I get in my big truck. I'm calling all of my friends. I'm like guys, go to the gym right now, if you worked out, doesn't matter. Rich Piana's coming to our gym right now. I was at like a chain gym, nothing crazy.

So I show up there, and the gym's packed with everybody showing up because I was calling everybody. We got in there, and we shot a video, and it was a squat video. Rich wanted to see me squat. It was horrible. Rich spotted me. We shot this whole great video. It was awesome. He pushed me real hard. Then after that, he could have left. But he didn't. He goes you want to go have a pancake eat off? I was like what. He was like is there a Denny's or an IHOP around here, and I was like yeah. So he was like grab some of your boys, your bodybuilder friends, let's go, and we're going

to see who can eat the most pancakes. We were all in our 20 something pancakes there. Rich beat everybody. The guy can eat. I will say that.

I didn't know what was going to come out of it. He didn't say anything to me about the video, what he was going to do with it or anything. I didn't have a clue. But after that night, he shook my hand, he said man, you're awesome. You can help a lot of people, and you can do something in the industry, there's nobody like you. But it's going to take you to figure that out.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: You're going to have to find a little niche or something like that. I shook his hand, and I left. It was the craziest thing ever. Then no joke, two days later, I'm laying in bed, next to my wife, and I have my notifications on my Instagram because I didn't get a lot of anything. I wasn't anything big ever, and my phone started going insane, and I was like what is that about, it can't be the video that I posted of me and Rich. It was like no way. And Rich had posted me on his social media, on his Instagram, and then a little clip video of a video that he was going to have put out on his YouTube. That was the start of it.

That's when I went from 200 to 2,000 and eventually me doing more, 2,000 to 4,000. I remember I started seeing it grow, and I started working harder. I was like okay, he gave me the opportunity, and that's what he told me. He's like I gave it to you. Here it is. Here's the reins, now what are you going to do with it? He was like now it's up to you. I'm going to help you, but I can't do anything else for you. This has to be you. He said what I'll do is I'd like to have you as a sponsored athlete with our team. So I said okay, awesome. So I did that.

Then as it would go, and I would start to learn more about who I want to be and what I want to do, that mentality, the five percent mentality I guess wasn't who I wanted to be as far as in the industry. Not just that, it's Rich Piana, five percent. It's not anything else.

Nick: Right. It's totally tied to Rich.

KC Mitchell: It's Rich. You can be a part of the group, and everybody's always asking me what are you thinking about, and I said look, if you can get the opportunity to go there, they have a great networking and marketing team. They're great. They're going to promote you, and it's a good place to see if people are really going to respond you or not. So it kept growing, it kept growing. I did a lot with Rich for about a year. I went to the UK with him. I did a lot.

I remember one day I went to his house, and I said hey, I said Rich, I think I want to try to do my own thing. It was hard for me to tell him that. I was scared to tell him that. I didn't want him to be like you're off the team, get out of my house. I didn't know. He's the boss. I didn't know how it was going to go. He said you know what, you should. He goes you should. You're going to have to work hard, though, and you're going to have to continue working hard. But you need to find your niche. You got to find something. Give people ... What makes you different from that other amputee? What makes you different from that other guy over here? That's what you have to do. That's what the industry is about. There's a billion physique/aesthetic guys. You can go on Instagram right now, and I can easily look through the explore feed, and there's hundreds of those guys that have great physiques.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: But not everybody knows who they are because there's so many of them. I remember one day Rich sitting there telling me, he goes you need to get as big as you can, put on some size, and just lift weight. Don't worry about anything else. Don't worry about your aesthetics, don't worry about nothing. Just lift, because that's what's going to motivate people. He says if you need any help or you have any questions, you can always ask me. That's the kind of guy he really was.

So I left that house that day, and I was on my own right then and there. He went and let people know that I wasn't with them anymore, and nothing crazy. Just he's going to do his own thing now. That was his goal for me when I first came there is what he said. He goes don't ride the coattail too long, and then you get branded, and that's all people are going to know you as is like the five percent, whatever. I said, no, absolutely. So I did. I started getting on my own, and started pushing myself and my brand my way.

The powerlifting thing came into play when one day I decided to go to watch the nationals in Vegas. I had some friends competing there. So I was like I'm going to go watch.

Nick: Sure.

KC Mitchell: Never thought about powerlifting ever. This time I still had no clue what I was going to do.

Nick: You're still squatting ugly at this point?

KC Mitchell: Yeah. I was squatting a lot like a bodybuilder. I would get in Smith machines and stuff because I could do really good form in Smith machines and really contract the muscles very good. So I was in the Smith machine a lot, not doing a lot of free squatting, not deadlifting at all, just bodybuilding kind of a thing, bro gym stuff basically. Just working out, you know. Not putting out any high end videos or anything like that.

I ended up going to Vegas, and Brandon Allen, this guy named Brandon Allen, he's like a world-class powerlifter, comes out, and he has this girl named Gracie V. behind him, and they are so ramped up, and I felt like I was back, as if I was getting ready to cage fight again. I just felt this adrenaline and this passion and everything. This was years ago. I just remember the whole thing, the way everything felt, the way everything was, I was like this is what I want to do. I was like this right here is different than bodybuilding. This right here is intense. There's a lot of adrenaline, and I'm an adrenaline guy, and this is what I want to do.

I was like I wonder how many amputees are doing this, or is it even possible? Because a squat that's a whole other animal than gym squatting or whatever. You got to hit deep on these squats. So I start looking it up. There's some amputees that were out there doing it, but nothing like respectable weight really. They're just going out there to do it. That was not me. Then I was like not just that, but I do not want to compete in any adaptive at all. I said I want to be out here against these guys.

Nick: Do you think training with Mike Rashid and those guys when they didn't know you were an amputee, did that play into that, where it's like you know what, I don't want to be in the adaptive, I want to be with everybody?

KC Mitchell: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. That was my whole thing. Yeah. I'm missing a body part, my leg's beat up, whatever. But I couldn't walk Disneyland before, and now I can walk

Disneyland kind of a mentality. I was like there's got to be ways to do things. You just go to figure it out. It's just going to be different. I knew that I was going to have to work harder than the normal person because I'm at a disadvantage. So no matter what, I'm going to have to work harder, train harder, put my body through more, more pain and everything like that. So I remember looking up online, couldn't find anything.

Nick: It's still hard to find stuff about powerlifting.

KC Mitchell: Yeah, really couldn't find stuff on it, especially with amputees. Like I said, you're not sitting there thinking oh I'm going to go put 500 pounds on my back and walk it out and squat. You just don't think that, you know what I mean? So I was like this is what I want to do. And I'm going to eventually step on a platform against able-bodied athletes, and I'm going to compete, and when I compete, I'm coming for them.

So I left that thing with my boys in the car, and I remember telling them, you're going to see me do this, I'm going to do this, and they're like dude, you should, it'd be awesome, and so I end up leaving the bro gym, and a local powerlifting gym was there in my town. So I drove down there, and I walked in, and the guy that owns it is named Lord Elliott. He works with the USPA, and I walk in, and his gym's bigger now. It's great now. It was real small. I remember walking in, I'm in shorts, I'm pumped, I'm like first day of powerlifting, here we go, and I go in, and I say hey, my name's KC Mitchell, blah, blah, blah, and he goes how are you doing, what can I do you, you know, and I was like actually, everybody's telling me I need to come here and talk to this guy named Lord Elliott, and he goes oh that's me.

I go hey, how you doing, and he was like oh what's going on, and I said I want to powerlift, and I remember him looking at me, and he looks down at my leg, and he goes I know, exactly like that. I said exactly. He goes like what push, pull, or deadlift, bench press. I was like no. Maybe starting out. But I want to be a full powerlifter. I want to do it all. He goes maybe we can work out some things. We'll do maybe some adaptive things. I was like no. I want to compete. I want to be a competitor in the USPA with no limitations, no regulations, no nothing. I don't want sympathy, I don't want nothing. I just want to be a powerlifter.

The look on his face was like one, he was stunned because I wanted to do it. He just knew how hard it was going to be because he has been in the powerlifting industry his whole life. So he knew what it was going to consist of. So he started helping me out and started coaching out and said if you want to do it, we can try. We can figure it out, but it's going to take a lot of work. I said I don't care. I want to do it. So I started training it. He started training me. I remember going in there my very first time doing a deadlifting workout, my lower back was killing me. It got so tight. He would have me go sit on this leg press machine and stretch my back out and things like that. I loved it. I loved every second of it, and I kept coming back, and I kept coming back.

Next thing you know, I went and did a push pull at Camp Pendleton, California. I was a nervous wreck, you know what I mean? Did it and people were just freaking out over that, and I was like man, imagine what people see when I do this eventually one day because I was only box squatting. I hadn't been able to get everything down to free squat yet. I was still learning. I was putting up very good weight with box squatting, which box squatting is hard because you come to a complete stop. It's a whole other animal.

Nick: It's enough for most people.

KC Mitchell: It's enough. Yeah. So I was doing that, and I was getting very strong at that. I was getting up in the high 400's and low 500's box squatting. So I was getting strong. Gracie V. saw me at that comp, and the next day she tracked me down and got ahold of me, and she was like I want to coach you for your first powerlifting meet. I want to be the one that does this for you. She's very passionate about powerlifting. She was like who's coaching you, and I was like nobody because at the time Lord was just running his business. He wasn't coaching me. So I said no, nobody's really coaching me. I had this guy named Jensen help me out with getting to this comp. He powerlifts, so he helped me out and prepped me for this comp.

Nick: Just programming and stuff.

KC Mitchell: Programming towards the end because I hit him up late about it.

Nick: So you're sort of freehanding your program.

KC Mitchell: Yeah, I was. I was. So Gracie started coaching me. Then I remember just one day I was in the gym, and I was with my guys, and I just had the box squat all set up, and I said you know what, let's get rid of that today.

Nick: Pull the box.

KC Mitchell: Let's just do it. I was like but let's do it as I'm coming down, pull the box from underneath me. He was like no, it's different, because that would be horrible to fall. I said you know what, forget it, let's just throw 235 pounds on and squat and see how it goes. And I was stressed out. It was a little bit different for me. Then all of a sudden I did it, and I hit the squat depth, and I hit it deep. I have that picture still. I posted it. That was when I was like it's on now. I remember posting it, and I was like goodbye box squat, get ready for me because here I come. I put a side shot, and everybody couldn't believe how deep I was. I couldn't believe how deep I was. So that's when it really started for me. I was like now I'm really gonna train. Gracie freaked out. She was like ready to get after it as well as I was.

It was literally over a year to be able to do that. It took that long. That's what I tell guys about going into the gym. A year and a half to be able to do what it is that I did.

Nick: Carrying 20 pound dumbbells around.

KC Mitchell: More than that when I finally started powerlifting. I mean you're talking three years from the time I finally stepped into a gym to where I was at powerlifting. Three years. That was the thing. I just never quit. I kept lifting. I kept my body in shape. But then powerlifting, I just never quit. A year and a half to be able to squat, free squat. A long time. Don't get me wrong, a lot of times I was driving, I'd be like maybe I'm just not going to do this. Maybe it's not possible. Maybe that's why there are no amputees doing this. Because it's hard. The squat is hard. Deadlifting is hard. The bench pressing is not that bad, because I'm not using my leg too much. Then I did it, and it was one of the greatest days in my life. That was like the overcoming for me. I finally felt like I became a straight up athlete now. So then I started training, and I picked out a comp and then five weeks up from my comp, I blew my right leg out bad. Bad.

Nick: While training?

KC Mitchell: While training with my dad. So I went to my old high school to speak at the high school, and that night was a football game, and they were having me walk the team out. So I had a lot going on that day. I was like you know what would be cool, my dad went to the same high school that I did. I said you know, Dad, what would be cool, why don't you and me go get a session in at that gym where you train and I train, like back in the day. He was like yeah.

So me and my dad are in there, and we're with the athletic director. The athletic director was one of my football coaches back then. So we're in there, and we're squatting, and I was squatting, I was doing 450 for a double or triple or something like that. And on my third one, as I was going down, I felt my right leg immediately tighten, and I was like what is that, and I got back up, and my dad was like you good, and I was like yeah. Man, that was weird. I'm good. There was nothing there. I walked around fine. Two hours later, my leg swelled, and you couldn't even touch it, I was in so much pain. Then it bruised, and I had torn a bunch of stuff in there.

So I had to back out of my first meet, and that devastated me. The thing was I wasn't though. I didn't back out until about a week out because I was doing all kinds of crazy therapy trying to get it ...

Nick: Anything to get up there.

KC Mitchell: I didn't quit. I kept trying, and the bruising was still even there. I just told everybody I'm sorry. I want to perform, but I can't get up there. I can't even squat. It hurts so bad. So I put it off. I rehabbed, and I healed up. Then I put out the next comp, which was the L.A. Expo, which was the one that I did. Then five weeks out, I hurt my hip real bad squatting with Mike O'Hearn at Gold's Gym, box squats. I did a 505 box squat, and I just felt this pinch in my hip, and I'm still recovering from that injury, and that was from back in December, and I still can't figure this out yet. I'm going to have to have some surgery or something.

Nick: Complicated relationship with the squat.

Heather: Yeah.

Nick: It's amazing to me with powerlifters have complex relationships with three lifts, like some dudes, are like god damn the bench press, god damn the deadlift.

KC Mitchell: It's squat for me. It's because I overcompensate so much. I try not to, but it's just the way my body works. Five weeks out, I'm devastated now. My hip's hurting really bad. So I started going back to my chiropractor, started working on it a lot. Then I was sponsored by a company called APEMAN, a powerlifting apparel line. I was with them, and they're good friends of mine. They were going to be there to film the whole thing, do all this, and they were really behind my back on all this. I remember calling them and telling them I'm in a lot of pain, and I'm in trouble. They're like what are you going to, back out, and I was like I will go up there and fail before I back out this time. I'm not backing out this time. I call Ed Coan, and ...

Nick: Mike O'Hearn and Ed Coan, they're just in the phone.

KC Mitchell: I do, because you know what, Mike O'Hearn and Ed and those guys, they really were just fascinated by what I was doing. It's like they understood. They lift. They understand how hard that stuff is. So to sit there and be watching me do it, they really love it. I'm like the drive, and how I

would never quit. I was an animal just like they were, and they loved it. So yeah, me having any problems, I could call those guys and figure out something. I remember telling Ed, my hip, and he was like trying to figure things out. He was like be easy, rehab, don't do a lot of squatting, don't do this.

So I just didn't back out, and I went to L.A. Expo, and we all show up there the night before, me, Apeman, Ed, my wife, all of us, and we're going over game planning on what we're going to do. They're like how's your hip, and I was like it hurts, I don't know. They were like well what weight does it hurt with, and I said it hurts period. There's no if I stick 1,000 pounds or 100 pounds on me. It hurts more than the other. They're like well what weight are you going to come out with. I was like I don't know, maybe 315 or something like that.

So we show up the next day, and I do my weigh-ins and the first thing after that is you give your first opening lifts.

Nick: And you can't take it back.

KC Mitchell: You can't take it back. So I'm sitting there, I'm running through my head what I'm going to do. Deadlift, I got. Bench press, I got. Everything's great there. Then I just remember pointing at 402 on the squat, and the Apeman guy and Ed go KC, come here real quick, and I was like what, and they're like come here. So they pulled me off to the side, and they're like I thought you said your hip hurts, I was like it does. They're like well why are you going to go so heavy. You know if you don't get your squat, you're done, you bomb the meet. I said I know. But here's my theory. This is what I told them. I have a theory behind this.

Nick: Guys, here's my theory to Ed Coan.

KC Mitchell: That's what I told them. Here's my theory. I said Ed, look guys, doesn't matter if I put this weight on or if I put this weight on. It hurts. I said but what I do know if I sit 402 pounds on my back, it's going to push me down to a point to where it's going to push me past that pain part, you know, and it's heavy. If I get something that's light, and it can't push me down, and my legs are actually somewhat stronger than that, I don't know if it's going to help. So my theory is it's going to help me get past that nagging part, that pitching part where it's stopping me, and then it's going to drop me, and I'm going to come up.

They just thought it was the craziest thing ever. They were like that's what you're going with.

Nick: Makes perfect sense.

KC Mitchell: That's what I told them. Basically that's what I said. I said it works. Stick weight on my back and let me go down, I need it. Ed said you can do it, there's no doubt that you can't squat that weight. We're just worried about your hip. I said it doesn't matter. The next day I showed up, and my chiropractor was there for me, and everybody was there, and they were warming me up and squats start warming up, and I'm lifting with top notch powerlifters. I'm on the big stage with these guys.

I'm back there, and everybody's warming up, and Ed's like so are you going to warm up, or what are you going to do. I said I'm going to do two warmups because for me to squat, even now, even when I was the best at my squatting, I can't squat 135 pounds free like that. I need at least 300 something pounds on my back to be able to squat, free squat good. I don't know what it is. I don't know if it's the

weight balancing me out or what, but if I have too much light weight, I just ... it doesn't work for me. So I told Ed, I'm waiting for them to get heavier, and they're like 275 pound monsters over there squatting 225 or something like that, and I'm sitting like there this cool guy waiting, oh it's too light. Put some weight on it.

Nick: Put some real weight on there.

KC Mitchell: So I went over there, and I did my warmup of 315, and I was high. Ed kept telling me you're high man. My hip was killing me. He goes all right, let's do one more 315. So I did one more. He's like dang, you're high. I was like let's do 365, let's see if it starts pushing me down there. It pushed me down there a little bit more. He said it's going to be close. I was like all right, it is what it is. I'm done. So I had my chiropractor work on my hip a little bit, stretch me out, and then I went out there, and I changed what my game plan was at the last second.

I was like all right, what I'm going to do is I'm going to get this weight, and I'm going to start to drop as fast as I can, and hopefully that momentum pushes me past, and I come right back up. So boom I drop, bam, I pound back up, and in my head, I'm like oh I got it, and I did it, and I was red-lighted, all three red lights.

Nick: Just not deep enough.

KC Mitchell: Not deep enough. Ed was like you squatted that so fast, why didn't you slow down and get control and get past that point, and I said I don't know, I thought I was going to have the weight push me through that point, you know, and he goes, nope, it stopped you. That hip part where it's catching stopped me. Then I'm stressed, and I got two more chances to go out there and do this. So I get ready, I get set up in the second lift, and then Gracie's out there yelling at me. Ed's spotting me, Ed Coan's spotting me, how awesome is that, you know? I just hear Gracie keep telling me to keep going down, and then I hear her say up, and I was like oh, that must mean I'm good, so I started coming up, and I came up, and I look and boom white lights, and then I was game on now. I'm in the meet now no matter what. It's on.

Nick: You get a number.

KC Mitchell: Yeah. That's good man, you got your in. Let's get through bench, deads. I was like no. I came here to do nine lifts, just like every other powerlifter. Nine lifts. As a powerlifter, can I say I don't want to do the next lift to save it, absolutely, but that was my first meet, and I wanted to do nine lifts. Whether I went with nine for nine, seven for nine, I wanted nine lifts. He goes well what do you want to do. I said I don't know, do 435 or something like that. I don't know. Who knows. I don't know. I don't know what I can do. I know I'm in pain.

Nick: How much did you squat in training?

KC Mitchell: I think it was 435.

Nick: That was the max you had done.

KC Mitchell: Yeah, in that comp, which wasn't my best. But I didn't care at that time. I was literally fighting through some stuff right there. So yeah, he watched my third attempt, and I squatted, and I bury that. Gracie, she was yelling at me down, down, down the whole time. I mean I think she was

trying to have me go through the ground to China or something like that because that was deep. I remember coming up, and when I was coming up, my hip inflamed, and the most horrendous pain came over me, and my whole body started shaking because I was in so much pain. Then I came up, and I held it, and I walked it in, and I got white lighted again, and I couldn't believe it.

Nick: You should have opened with 435.

KC Mitchell: The thing is I probably could have.

Heather: No more messing around with the light weights.

KC Mitchell: The weight wasn't a problem. All them knew that. It was just the amount of pain I was in. And doing my third squat, that third one really hurt. It hurt pretty bad. I remember being so pumped up. Ed Coan's freaking out. Everybody's freaking out. Bench press, it was boring, I think. I have a good bench press, but I still think it's boring. Get out there, I bench. I have no problems with my bench. Then deadlifts come up, and I had a goal of wanting to hit 600-pound deadlift for the first time. I wanted to do it there. I went out there, I did my first lift, and I kept yelling at Ed and Gracie and them, I want 600, you know, and they're like well you better pull the next one faster than you pulled that one before I'm going to give you 600.

Nick: Right. Seriously.

KC Mitchell: So then they put 578 on the bar, and I pulled it pretty good. I pulled it pretty good. And the crowd starts to build, because this is at the expo. The crowd's starting to build. And then I'm in the back, and I see Ed come back there, and he sits down. He doesn't say anything to me. I'm like what the hell, why is he not saying anything to me, and I'm sitting there waiting for him to tell me what my next weight is, and I said okay, well I'll ask what am I doing next, Ed, like that, and he goes you know what, go out there, and all I'm going to tell you is you better pull it or you better pass out pulling it. I'm not going to tell you the weight, but you need to pull it.

Nick: I like that.

KC Mitchell: And I was like all right. So then everybody's out there, I'm behind the curtains and Brandon Allen, the guy that I first watched ever, was lifting in this comp. He comes back there, and I can hear the crowd, and I can hear the guy, the emcee, and he tells everybody that 'One Leg Monster,' starts going off, and Brandon comes back, and he goes dude, you're about to set powerlifting on the map right now. I was like what? He goes there are hundreds and hundreds of people out there all around the stage as deep as I can see 'em, all out there to watch you come lift this weight. He goes go out there and show them what you're made of and show them what you're made up and show them what powerlifting and this is all about. He goes I've never seen a crowd like that ever, and he goes it's for you.

So I was pumped. So I go out there, and I can see the weight on the bar, and I knew it was close to 600 pounds. I got all fired up. Everybody had me fired up, and I went out there and I pulled and held it and set it down softly and whitelighted and it was 600.1 pounds, and the crowd, everything just went insane. It was emotional for me. I was very emotional after all that. I had come so long, it took so long to get to that point to be able to do that, and just to see how much it motivated and how many people were impressed and pumped about it. It was like everything I ever thought, like that first day when I told Mike Rashid that one day this is it, what I'm going to do, that right there, that was

the ending of all of everything I had finally set out to do years and years ago. It took four years pretty much to be able to go from that hospital bed and those narcotics and all that to stepping on that platform and being a legitimate athlete at a decent level.

So yeah. After that, that's when it really started getting crazy for me.

Nick: Sure. I was wondering, what was it like for your family watching you go through all that?

KC Mitchell: If you watch the video, you see my daughter. My daughter loves watching me. If you watch the video, you see her in the side screen of when I'm getting ready to dead lift, and she's jumping up and down.

Nick: Right.

KC Mitchell: Being crazy. I mean I can see her, so in my head, there was no way I wasn't going to pull that in front of her. It was my time to shine in front of her. So at the end, it was just chaos, emotions. I was in the back, pretty much an emotional wreck. My wife was crying, my dad was crying, my mom was crying. One, they knew how much I had been through with all the bad things and then training-wise, all the injuries I had gone through, the pain, the wanting to quit, not thinking it's possible. Then finally setting out something that a lot of people told me, no you can't do it. Doctors telling me I shouldn't be doing it, people wondering how am I doing it, and then I show them, and I did it, and yeah, the emotions were intense. I mean Ed Coan said he's never had chills like that over his whole body, and if I can shock the goat, that's something pretty special, because the guy's seen it all.

Yeah, like I said, that's when everything started. I just continued powerlifting, and now I'm moving around on different things, changing things around, trying to see what else is out there that people haven't done.

Nick: You're still driven by that, really, wanting to do what hasn't been done.

KC Mitchell: It's a crazy accomplishment to do it, to be one of the first ones to do it or set the bar at a whole other level. The thing is now, guess what's out there, amputee powerlifters. There's a guy in the UK, he's chasing my numbers down, and I can't wait. I want him to. I want him to beat it. He's a couple hundred pounds off, which that's quite a bit of weight to shuffle around somewhere in the weights because I backed off powerlifting a little bit. I still deadlift, and I still do my stuff, but I'm just chasing some other things right now, but I tell you what, as soon as somebody beats it, you'd better believe I'm coming right back because that's what it was for. These guys are motivated, they've seen it now. Now they're motivated to beat my number that's sitting out there, like amputee's world's strongest right now. He's in the UK. I keep my eye on him. I see him. He's doing a lot of meets. He's trying, and he's working hard.

But there's other amputees that are starting to do it. Not just that. I can't tell you how many emails, direct messages, whatever, that I get from all kinds of people with all kinds of disabilities, especially guys missing legs, and wanting to know how I do it, how I did it. All I can tell them is time. It's time. I'll give them what leg do I use, how did I do it, how did I train. Because if you watch my squat, I have a big back squat, like almost a good morning. I train my back to be able to handle that kind of weight. I did a lot of good mornings. I did a lot of the squatting like that, and that's my form because I don't have dorsal flexion in my left ankle, so I can't rock back because if I do, then my toe comes up. So to

do that, I have to squat with a big back. Stan Efferding squats with a big back, too, and he's a house, you know what I mean?

Nick: Sure.

KC Mitchell: The thing is I've never had back problems, and I fractured my back when I got injured in that accident, and I've never had a back problem, never. So whatever it is I'm doing, I'm doing it fine for me or my body mechanics it works for it. So yeah. So it's amazing to see how many people are actually starting to do it now, which that was the point. That was the whole point of it.

Nick: Sure. Have you gotten any blow back from other amputees for not being willing to embrace the adaptive athlete?

KC Mitchell: Sometimes. Absolutely. I just say why. I tell them why. Maybe down the road I guess. The thing is to me, it's like going against an able-bodied athlete, it's harder. It's harder. They've got all their limbs, they're full blown athletes. It's harder. Because if it wasn't, there would be all kinds of amputees up in this mix if it was the same. My thing is like there's not a lot of adaptive sports, really. If there is, there's a lot of different ways things can go. I just was like I'm not about that.

Nick: You like an objective standard.

KC Mitchell: Right. Exactly. It's a standard, and that's it. Now there's that thing going called Super League Live.

Nick: Sure.

KC Mitchell: I plan on being on that.

Nick: That's a different kind of challenge.

KC Mitchell: And I love that kind of training. Actually Mike O'Hearn had me coming out to the first one. He got ahold of me, but it was two weeks out, and I was like Mike, there's no way I can do that two weeks out. I have to train for stuff like that. I said some of these freak athletes that are like that all the time, they can do it. They can just show up and do it. But I have to train my body. It's going to take me some time. I plan on doing one. I plan on being one of the first ones to do it.

Nick: I've only watched a little bit of that. How set is what you're going to be doing before the actual event?

KC Mitchell: It's pretty set. It's just a lot of different workouts. It's pretty intense.

Nick: There's a lot of volume, a lot of weight, too.

KC Mitchell: It's heavy weight, high volumes. 12 reps of heavy weight per station. If you don't hit your 12 reps, then you don't get the points. But if you go too light, then you don't get a lot of points. You get a little bit of points. So it's very ... tactic. You got to be tactful when you're choosing your weight, and you got to think, you're moving station to station to station. So you got to make sure you're not killing yourself out at one station, and you can't finish or perform at the next station, and I like that. Like I said, the training scheme is tough. That's something I plan on doing eventually. Very

interested in it. Something that nobody's done.

I actually kind of considered stepping on the bodybuilding stage. I know there are amputees who do that.

Nick: There are powerlifters who will do a show after being powerlifting for a long time, too.

KC Mitchell: Absolutely.

Heather: Lots of crossover.

KC Mitchell: I'm just going to do it to add a little notch onto something I've accomplished for me. How many of them will do it? I don't know. I know I got motivated by it last weekend. I was training with [Jeremy Buendia and Hany](#) and even Hany was like man, you could probably do well. He goes your work ethic, there's not a lot of people, the way you train, that's how Jeremy, that's how Phil, that's how Jay, that intensity, how you don't quit, and you push, that's the mentality I like. He had me take my shirt off, and I was like Jeremy, keep your shirt on. They were looking at me, and Hany was telling me things I should work on and stuff like that, and he said well what is it you want to do. I said I don't know. I said I know I have really bad burns and stuff down my quads from when I got blown up, and my quads are really atrophied from all that scarring and everything like that. Quad growth is very hard for me, but my hamstrings grow like crazy. He said dude, who cares, look at Jeremy. He's huge. Jeremy's a big guy. He does physique. He's not a skinny physique guy. Jeremy's setting the standard for being a big physique guy. There's no reason why staying physique ... Now physique is not the little guy thing. Look at him.

I go you're absolutely right. So dude, slash some shorts on, and why don't you think about doing one next spring.

Heather: There you go.

Nick: Next spring.

KC Mitchell: Next spring.

Heather: Next spring, all right.

KC Mitchell: Hany's actually going to help me out with it. He wants to help me out. He was, like I said, kind of impressed by how hard I was training and stuff like that, in there with Jeremy and stuff like that. He can see it. We talked about it, how big is your waist, and it's like a 33. He's like dude, you'd be a 30. He goes you're already so wide. It'd be great. So he has me doing this off-season thing. He said next spring, April, May, so I may do that. Just to do it.

Heather: We'll have to have you back then.

KC Mitchell: Yeah, just to do it.

Nick: A lot more cardio.

KC Mitchell: Well, I've been doing a lot of cardio lately. I've really got into a lot of cardio. I don't

know I started doing it just a little bit. I've been trying to trim up a little bit and get a little more healthier.

Nick: What does cardio consist of for you?

KC Mitchell: I've been doing a lot of swimming and biking.

Nick: Okay.

KC Mitchell: Stationary bike. I am planning on doing cycling.

Nick: You've been hanging out with [Kris Gethin](#) too much.

KC Mitchell: That guy. I love that guy. He's an absolute animal. Him and Ashley, they drive me to do a lot of things that I do because Kris can do anything. He's strong. I've done some of his DTP workouts.

Nick: Yeah, I've seen those.

KC Mitchell: We've shot YouTube videos together. He's strong. But at the same time, he can go run a marathon the next damn day, and I like that. I like that. But like I said, I saw him deadlifting not too long ago again.

Nick: He was deadlifting heavy like 500 pounds, six, seven days before he did the [Iron Man](#).

Heather: The week before his Iron Man.

KC Mitchell: And I like that. I like things like that. I like those kind of athletes. I'm trying to do that. I was 255 when I competed. I'm down to 230, 235 now. The thing is I'm pretty much just as strong. Am I as strong as when I stepped on the platform? Absolutely not, because I peaked out. You know, you peak out.

Nick: It's a different kind of strength.

KC Mitchell: But as far as raw strength period, yeah, I always maintain it. But the cardio, I've actually been really enjoying seeing the body change and seeing the freakiness start to happen, veins start to come, striations, just different things. I've been really enjoying that, and it's the same thing, like an addiction now. I want to see where I can get myself to. When I was telling Hany that, he was like well why don't you step on stage? Maybe I will. So I might.

Heather: That's what it is, yeah.

Nick: So Ed Coan tells you how to powerlift, Hany Rambod tells you how to bodybuild.

KC Mitchell: The best, right?

Nick: How could you turn down those opportunities?

KC Mitchell: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Nick: That's the thing, the opportunity arises, you got to say yes to life.

KC Mitchell: So that's probably the next goal now. I've been doing more bodybuilding style. I still am deadlifting, because for some reason everybody likes seeing me deadlift, which is so funny. I could do my Instagram, and I could post a video of me squatting, which is so hard to do, and it could be 500 pounds squat, and it doesn't do well, but I post a video of me deadlifting, and it does well. I'm like well I guess everybody's ... Well deadlift's like the cool thing now. Everybody's deadlifting. There was some girl or something like that that deadlifts 520 something or some crazy number, Stephanie or something like that. Incredible.

Nick: I'm a sucker for those powerlifter girls on Instagram. I can't stop following them. It's the deadlift. Watching a girl who's 140, 150 pounds pull 500 pounds off the ground is amazing to me.

KC Mitchell: It's impressive. The first time I ever got to watch a girl do that was when I was at the destination Dallas. I was there for an event, and there was a girl, she's a girl powerlifter. I was like a fan boy of her. I thought she was awesome. We were walking in the same area, and she starts freaking out when she sees me. She's like oh my god, can I take a picture with you? I was like what. I was like can I take a picture with you, you're awesome. You don't understand. Don't worry about me. So I ended up getting to deadlift with Nikki Gunz. She's like yeah, it's not my crazy day, heavy day, so why don't we do some triples and stuff. I was like perfect. This girl is ripping 405 off the ground for triples like it was nothing. I was so impressed by it, and so I was like well I need to slide a plate on. I'm not going to let you out deadlift me here. No way. Just watching it is impressive to see. They're not huge girls. These are little, tiny girls that are moving four or 500 pounds around. It's impressive. It really is.

Nick: There's just an interesting technique to that lift, too. Everybody has to find the right way to do it.

KC Mitchell: Absolutely.

Nick: I was talking with a strength coach in one of our other podcasts. People can say I squat this, and it can mean a whole bunch of different things. But if you say I deadlift 500 pounds, that tells you something. That's impressive no matter who you are.

Heather: Something about that lift.

KC Mitchell: I remember the first time I deadlifted 500 pounds, and it was a milestone. Then when you get up to 600 pounds, everybody's like now you're with the big boys. Once you get up to the six's and stuff like that, now you're moving some good weight around, but people getting their form down and their different things down, it's different. People see me deadlift, and they're like that looks like it's painful. I'm like yeah, but it's not at all. I don't use a lot of legs, because I can't squat down like that. It works for me. I've been able to pull 600 without injury. I think the best I've pulled was like 620-something is the best I've ever pulled. But 600 in comp. But yeah, deadlifting does the best on social media for some reason. I think it's more intense too. I feel like it's a raw strength thing.

Heather: Exactly.

KC Mitchell: When you can pull that much weight off the ground, there's no momentum, there's no

...

Heather: Yeah, it's just you and gravity at that point. You're not doing body mechanics or anything like that. It's just you and gravity and who's going to win.

KC Mitchell: It is. I think that's probably why that's the big thing. So my deadlift I keep up because every time I travel people want to deadlift with me, and a lot of people call me like hey, we have this event, can you come deadlift at it? I'm like sure. I'm there. I'll deadlift.

Nick: It's not a bad approach if you just deadlift heavy enough and then body build the rest of the time. That works for a whole lot of people, man.

KC Mitchell: Jeremy, I didn't know he would deadlift, but he's like here in a couple weeks when I really get back into my offseason, when he's like fuller, because he's still a little bit too lean to be deadlifting, he's like, we'll get some deadlift sessions, and I was like you deadlift? And he goes, all that your waist gets big with the deadlift, that's ridiculous. That's not going to happen. He goes I've been deadlifting for five years training. Hany has me deadlift. Sometimes he has to tell me to hold the back a little bit because I do get a little bit crazy with it, and I was like that's cool. That made me want to do the bodybuilding thing a little bit more because I do enjoy deadlifting.

Nick: Ronnie Coleman could deadlift a little bit, too, ya know.

KC Mitchell: That guy. Yeah, that's a specimen right there.

Nick Collias: Well cool, whatever you do, man, we'll be watching. Hope to have you back again. Thanks so much for coming and talking with us.

KC Mitchell: Thank you.

Heather Eastman: Thank you.



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