

Valentin Tambosi

Time Frames for Natural Bodybuilders

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Danny Lennon: Valentin, welcome to the podcast.

Valentin Tambosi: Thank you so much Danny.

Danny Lennon: We're going to have a good conversation today I think off the back of a few things we've talked about over the last number of weeks. Before we get started maybe let people listening know a bit about your background, maybe first how you got interested in this sport in general and then get them up to speed with what you currently do workwise and the area you're involved in as an athlete as well.

Valentin Tambosi: Sure, sounds good. So about four years ago, I started doing the strength coach program of Intelligence Strength and that whole thing kick started for me this whole thing of learning as much as possible about hypertrophy training and nutrition. So based on that, I started to do personal training and later on after personal training, I got into online coaching which is what I'm doing right now. So that really spark an interest sooner or later in competing on the natural stage and now I'm prepping people to get on stage for natural competitions. So the whole thing really kick started with me just being interested in building my muscle and later on learning as much as possible about whatever approach you can have to hypertrophy training. So that just keeps developing and developing and I just want to learn as much as possible about the whole thing. So now we're here, I'm a fulltime online coach doing

what I love basically which is quite a luxury nowadays I guess and have the pleasure to talk on your podcast.

Danny Lennon: Cool. So just in relation to a lot of clients that you work with obviously there's a strong natural bodybuilding focus there as well. Maybe give people an idea of maybe the kind of spectrum of types of clients you typically work with most often, maybe some notable achievements that you've had and where you've been travelling.

Valentin Tambosi: Yeah sure definitely. I think especially here with the gym people get more and more interested in natural competition and competing and basically the people I coach it's male and female for all the classes for the respective gender. I have figure clients. I have physique clients and body building clients, both men and women. I really want to be somebody that is able to prep everybody and bring the people for the respective rule set into the conditioning that is required to win. So definitely last year was my first real year of coaching people to the stage and was already quite successful.

I had five procos and I travelled with Andreas who owns the gym and his girlfriend Merena to the States and we did couple of shows over there. And that really got us thinking that there's real interest in natural bodybuilding and more and more people should start competing. And I mean we have plenty of people in the gym that fly over to the States and compete there and they come back. So it's a lot more than just training for a competition that is nearby. People really take time and effort and money into their hands to go somewhere and actually show off what they've been working on.

Danny Lennon: Sure, that level of I think aspiration that a lot of the people have within this gym is kind of quite evident once you've been here a while. One thing I thought might be a good way to start off talking about some of your coaching philosophy and even your own training philosophy because one big thing that came up a few times that we've had conversations is the idea that there is one method to do something or there's one right way whether it's training or nutrition is just completely flawed and people get into a lot of trouble that way. So if someone were to ask you what your philosophy towards training is or your philosophy towards coaching and they're probably two separate questions, how would you answer that?

Valentin Tambosi: I would say that as far as training and nutrition goes, I don't really have a philosophy and that itself would be the basis of my coaching philosophy because I think you have to feed everything to the individual and that in itself is my coaching philosophy. So I'm not really a high carb guy, a high fat guy or a high frequency guy. It really depends on a person. All these things are tools to achieve something and when we know how to use these tools and what these tools entail, then we can use them properly. And it's not really about being in one camp or in the other camp, because I think nowadays that has become too much of an emphasis and people just want to be part of a group. I always tell the people in the strength coach course that they should not think in terms of I want to be in group b, or group a or group or whatever. You should see what works for that particular person or for yourself and then work with that. It should be evidence-based, yes, but that doesn't mean it's always high carb or it's always high fat or it's always high frequency. So you just have to take a look on what's underlying under the tools and then use the tools properly. That's basically the coaching philosophy that I use and it's definitely harder to sell than being in one camp and only representing that part of that.

Danny Lennon: Yeah I think with something like bodybuilding, it's probably even more important to break away from the idea that even with evidence-based practice or looking at research, that typically will show us on average what's working for most of the people most of the time. And then obviously there are some individualization, but when you talk about someone in a competitive body building level, that's probably even more magnified because people are going to the extremes and it's like very small changes make a huge difference as opposed to the general population.

Valentin Tambosi: It is definitely and I mean the more competitive the person, the higher the person aims, the more you have to individualize, so you can't really go by something that works for the average, you just have to create tailor-made programs in a tailor-made approach for that particular person, because they want to go beyond just the six-pack. You have to give them everything you have that allows them to do that.

Danny Lennon: One thing you noted before is the increase in popularity of natural bodybuilding within not only Austria, but really worldwide as well over the last few years. What are some of the biggest changes

you've seen yourself within the natural bodybuilding community over that time if there's any that stand out.

Valentin Tambosi: Meanwhile our competitions that we've done and Andreas has documented them very well, it has sparked a lot of more interest here and what I know from the States is that while the shows are getting bigger and there's more frequent shows, that's bodybuilding in itself. There's a lot more classes, there's a lot more bikini, there's a lot more so to speak beginner classes if you want to call them that.

So in general everything is growing, but the classic bodybuilding is not really that fast growing, so we have to differentiate between those. I'm not saying one is good, one is bad, I'm just saying that a lot of people are more interested in competing based on social media and what they see there and they just want to be part of it. And there's a huge difference between competing for a bikini show and not having as much as mass there as a female bodybuilder. There's a huge difference there and the entry level has just been lowered so much that now a lot more people compete which still is fine, which is fine. It grows everything, but we just have to be careful that the quality of competition stays high

And I hope the federations that exist and there's plenty of natural body building federations which is another huge problem and another topic in itself is that they really emphasize the quality of a show and not how often they do shows throughout the year because right now it's pretty crazy how many shows pop up each weekend and then you have like five people at a single show and it's just ridiculous, there's like nobody watching and nobody is interested just because you get a sword or something for a trophy. Yeah it's not very competitive, so I think that should be emphasized in the future.

Danny Lennon: Yeah with that because of this increasing not only the number of federations and classes and like you mentioned with social media driving a lot of that, do you think that's a problem for some of the motives people may have originally for getting into the sport because just I mean for someone completely in the outside, if you take 15 years ago when there was no social media around, if someone was getting into bodybuilding, it was because they loved the sport of bodybuilding whereas now at least for some people maybe there's a trap that if I do this, this is the way to keep me

motivated because I want to get in shape, but not necessarily actually caring about the sport itself. I was wondering, have you seen that?

Valentin Tambosi: I think that's a great point because you often see some federations give out a transformations award at their show, big four people that start maybe even obese and then their goal is to transform themselves by going on stage and then it's just a whole -- that's the wrong approach to the whole thing. You should start out obese in order to get into a contest prep. You should start out with somebody that has a good relationship with food first of all because it's just going to get worse within the contest prep because it's just a long prep and it's brutal and it's not really teaching you properly how to behave next to food because it's controlled starvation basically and you'd really want to emphasize that for somebody that already has a bad behavior when it comes to food. I think that is a huge problem and a lot of people get into it for the wrong reasons especially females because they tend to overeat when they are not prepping for a show and end up prepping for a show every single year

And you can't really recover from a long extended contest prep which is hard on your body for numerous reasons and then once you're out of that contest prep season get right back to binge eating and then you get fat and then you decide to compete again to get rid of all the fat and that's a constant cycle that's never going to get you anywhere positive.

So I see that quite often and it's a huge, huge problem and this is something I think a lot more coaches should emphasize after a show how they transition their clients out of that phase and into relatively normal eating behavior and that is a huge challenge. Very often, that is a greater challenge than actually getting the person lean is getting them back to normal body fit levels and have a good relationship with food. But that is so important.

Danny Lennon: Yeah that's really interesting. I suppose one part of it is that it's maybe you can make the argument that it's a net benefit to see something like the growth of bodybuilding and physique and just the social media aspect of the fitness industry getting more people to try and get into shape. But on the other side to that especially for someone within bodybuilding and that community, it maybe sometimes strange to see people who are doing it just for the end result and maybe hating the entire process of it. And

sure like a contest prep is undoubtedly difficult, but one thing that Andy definitely said when he was on the podcast and I know you've kind of said similar is that even though it's difficult the kind of process is what you kind of enjoy and that's the inherent appeal of the sport whereas some people are, "I need to suffer as much as possible just so one day I will have this kind of end point and maybe not the right approach mentally.

Valentin Tambosi: Yeah, if you go into a contest prep with the mindset of suffering as much as possible and making it as hard as possible on yourself it's going to be a disaster, because you're going to suffer regardless. It's going to be hard anyway if you want it to or not. So just try to make it as smooth of a ride as possible, but don't think that you can get into the shape that is required to win when we're talking all the classes I just mentioned earlier is that it's going to be easy. It's going to be very, very, very hard and that in itself is why you should know, why you get into this. It's not because you want to lose weight. If you want to lose weight, you just go on a small deficit and that's it. You don't have to go step on a stage. So know what you're getting into because it's serious stuff.

Danny Lennon: Right. One thing I did want to talk about in this conversation, I think we mentioned a few days ago was timeframes when it comes to natural bodybuilding and so we can both look at both the offseason and then the contest prep itself, so just wondering where the best place to start here is when someone's trying to work out what are good guidelines for the right amount of time to use as an off season, the right amount of time for a contest prep and then maybe how that changes from person to person over the experience levels.

Valentin Tambosi: Sure, 100%. I'm going to start with the timeframes for a contest prep because that leads us to all the other timeframes and this is one of my favorite topics to talk about because people have no idea how long term you have to think in natural bodybuilding. Very often we look at enhanced bodybuilding or basically the IFPP bodybuilding which is totally fine and I'm a fan of it myself, but you hear somebody like let's say Ryan Coleman say he's on a 12-week diet and then he's ready for the Mr. Olympia. And people take that number and want to use it for a natural bodybuilder and that's just not going to work. I mean you're not going to be ready in 12 weeks, in 14 weeks, in 16 weeks and most likely not in 18 weeks.

So the lowest I would prep someone and he should be already in very great shape is 24 weeks. That's the absolute minimum in my opinion and what I see throughout the industry and throughout coaches doing is that they use something like 24 to 38 week preps and that's just because you tend to lose more muscle as a natural competitor obviously and you just need to go slower. The more you can slow it down, the better. That doesn't mean you prep for one and a half years because that's just not bearable, but it means that if you can prep 30 weeks instead of 24 weeks, you're going to pick 30 weeks because it's a lot easier. You can implement more refeeds, implement more diet breaks and that's just going to lead to more lean tissue on stage.

And so many people underestimate how long it takes to get like those last two or three pounds off. It takes very, very long and when you don't have the time, what are you going to do? Create a deficit, more stress? That's just going to lead to more muscle loss and eventually you look worse on stage. So the more time you have, the better generally speaking. Since the prep is so long, we also have to consider how long it takes to transition out of a contest prep phase, because hormonally you're going to be on the level of a 70-year old man basically and females are the same. So we just have to give people. We just have to give people enough time to full recover from an entire contest prep and usually we're looking at like three to six months until hormonal levels cortisol levels are back to normal.

So when you consider all that together, it almost takes an entire year from contest preps start to being recovered from that contest prep to actually get back to a phase in training and a phase of life where you can actually feel good again and train properly again because within those months past the contest prep, you're not going to feel great even though food has increased, but you're not going to be normal again. It just takes some time and for some longer, for some shorter, but it just takes some time to get back to normal.

So based on that timeframe, we can already say that competing every year is not a very good idea, because how much progress are you going to really make within a couple of months of being normal again and then increasing your muscle mass. So it just takes longer between contest preps and I would say most people would be in a great spot if they compete two to four years. I think that is a good timeframe and they just give themselves enough

time to improve considerably compared to the last time they've stepped on stage. So my first season of competing was 2014, my second year was 2017 and I will compete again in 2020. So there's always three year steps and I will continue that on.

So even though the timeframes between contest preps are longer for somebody who's natural, I think once you've built a certain amount of muscle mass and you're like in your mid 40s until up your 50s, you can certainly compete more frequently because there's not that much muscle to be built anymore, because you've already reached your genetic potential and that's not going to happen that much within two or three years. So competing every year might be more suitable for somebody that's an old competitor and usually those are the most impressive ones in my opinion because they've just built and accumulated so much muscle over decades of training that they obviously look better than somebody who is 21 years old and has been training for five years. They have like 25 years of training under their belts, they have to have more muscle mass than somebody with a comparable genetic potential.

So if we consider all these timeframes, 24 to 38 week preps and two to three year off seasons, a lot of people are surprised by how long everything takes and how long term you have to think. But if you buy into that idea and give yourself enough time, I think you're going to make more progress than somebody that just tries to compete every single year and very many cases look worse every year because you just take the diet from last year and take it into your next diet and do that again and again and you're never going to be improved on stage and that's the worst thing in my opinion.

Danny Lennon:

Yeah, I guess that might be counterintuitive to some people who are maybe starting out on this because they're most excited about this kind of thing that they've done their first show and they just can't wait to go again maybe and the idea that well actually maybe a shorter frequent or a higher frequency is probably better later in your career where you've built more muscle especially for someone who's very early in their training career, now they're in a good spot to build some muscle instead of trying to diet for six months or so.

Valentin Tambosi:

Exactly. I mean just ask yourself, when do you think is the best time to build muscle in your 20s and in your 30s or in your 40s and 50s? It's in your 20s and in your 30s, so you should compete less

often then and once you've built all that tissue, you can increase the frequency of your shows and that makes a lot more sense to me and that is displayed by some people like well if we've mentioned a well-known bodybuilder who's like in his mid-50s and he still kicks ass and he's a very good natural bodybuilder and he can compete every single year because he knows he's not going to build five kilograms of muscle one year, so he has very short preps because he stays in shape year round and he's able to do that because he's body is used to getting to those low body fat levels. I can't get into shape in like 12 weeks, that's impossible. I need my 30 weeks of preps to really show up in shape, but somebody that has done it for like 30 years it's an entire different story.

Danny Lennon: All right you mentioned previously that for the start of the prep, the personal should already be in very decent shape. Do you have any kind of guidelines that you would tell people, okay by the time we're going to start your contest prep, this is the type of body fat you should be at by that point?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure that's a great question. I think before I answer the question, I would like to mention measuring body fat in itself is very complicated, so we cannot just simply go off a Dexo scan or measuring your skinfolds, because usually those are not accurate enough and even though it sounds funny, I'm going to offer something that's even more inaccurate and that's just me looking at the person and estimating your body fat percentage based on what I have seen over the course of my career and the more clients you work with and the more pictures you look at, you create a database in your head and you get very good in comparing people and comparing shapes and comparing body fat percentages.

But to throw out some numbers, for males I would say you shouldn't be any higher than like six, seven percent of body fat and the higher your body fat you start out with, the longer the prep is going to be. The leaner you are, the shorter the prep can be or you can extend the prep and just do more frequent diet breaks or refeeds right? Those are two options you have.

For females I would say, not over 23, 24% and it also comes down to body fat distribution. There's quite a few people that carry body fat very well. I'm one of them and when people look at me, they're like, "Oh my God, you're like 10 kilograms over stage

weight.” And it’s like, “Nope, it’s double that, because I carry body fat where you don’t see it right now.” I have my abs, I have my veins and my biceps and people immediately think you’re in shape, but it’s a very different kind of animal when you have to be on stage and just wear posing trunks, right? Biceps mainly is not going to do it. So you have to keep all those things in mind when you estimate how long the person takes until they show up in shape on stage. Those are just some rough guidelines, but based on that you can map out a plan how long the person will have to prep.

Danny Lennon: There’s two things. One that I’ll get back to in a moment is that kind of “coach’s eye” for assessing leanness that you’ve just mentioned and we’ve talked about before, but then also with the offseason then if we know there’s going to be a certain point that you want to be at by the time you start your contest prep. As someone goes through that say they have two or three year off season, how do you get them to think about maintaining or approaching their diet and training to maintain that body composition so that by the time they get to the contest prep, they’re in good enough shape. How do you put in shorter periods of dieting or what kind of rate of gain do you look at? How do you manage that whole offseason process?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure, that’s a great question. First of all, I’m not really that much into gaining weights, so I’m not really prescribing my clients that they have to gain like one percent of the body weight per month. We’re not saying that because usually it’s not a linear process and very often what I’ve seen with people once they’ve reached a certain performance and if we focus on performance and training, very often their body weight just jumps up and body composition seems to appear unchanged and they just seem much more muscular.

And if I would just focus on a particular rate of gain per month, in most cases, that just leads to more consistent fat again and with most of my guys which are all advanced, I just focus on performance in the gym and provide all the nutrients to have proper recovery. That’s just basically it and I don’t really focus so much on any particular gain rates as far as implementing mini-cuts or stuff like that to make sure they show up for the contest preparation in shape already is I usually like to schedule the last minute cut one year before they start their contest prep. To me that is an appropriate timeframe to say, “Okay you have enough

time to get rid of any diet fatigue which is not going to be much from a mini-cut and get back into a long term surplus and then get back into the contest prep completely recovered and with hopefully new muscle tissue.”

So that is just a rough guideline. For some people it may be less and they have a mini-cut like six months before their contest prep, they’ll think the longer out, the better, but it should also not be like a two-year off season phase where they never, ever see a deficit. I think that’s not ideal.

Danny Lennon:

Perfect. That second thing was then a coach being able to have a good idea of where their athlete is actually at in terms of body fat percentage. I know you said this can obviously vary with the competence of the coach and even for those who maybe don’t have a coach, they will tend to like you say underestimate how long it’s going to take them to get in shape based on where they’re currently at, not only given that it will slow down over time, but like you say just how much more there is to lose. Is there a way, because I’m wondering like, except for going and getting an experienced coach, is there any way that someone can get better at that or it’s just more exposure to seeing shows, to looking at things and how have you developed that yourself do you think?

Valentin Tambosi:

I think it’s just being so interested in the whole thing of bodybuilding since 10 years basically now that I’ve looked at so much pictures both of natural bodybuilders and enhanced bodybuilders that you see start seeing differences and you start realizing that somebody with a lot more muscle mass can carry a lot more body fat and still look very muscular and somebody with less muscle mass once they’ve passed a certain body fat count, they just don’t look that muscular anymore. Little things like that, you just learn by looking at plenty, plenty of pictures and obviously working with people in person helps a lot as well, seeing people pose in front of you when you see somebody in contest shape and they’re standing right in front of you, that’s very eye-opening to see and a lot of people have not seen that.

I’ve been to shows with people that have never seen somebody with fretted glutes and they’re like in awe how that looks in person. It’s very different than on pictures on video. We have to differentiate between those things and I really would like to give like a blueprint how you can improve that, but it’s basically a

boring answer is look at a lot, lot of pictures of both natural and enhanced bodybuilders. That basically would be my go-to solution for that.

Danny Lennon: We talked a bit about how you structure the off season when it comes to the contest prep itself now given that we're talking this longer and extended prep where that gives you enough time to use diet breaks or maintenance blocks in between where they're essentially not in a deficit. In an ideal world, how would you structure that with someone that comes in starting the prep at a good body fat percentage, give themselves enough time. What sort of way should that prep look in terms of things like that, of diet breaks and refeeds and so on?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure, yeah. First of all, very often people are in fear of being ready too early and that is just not possible. You cannot be ready too early. It's not going to happen because let's say you are ready four weeks out from your show, all you do is you just slowly bring up calories. You refeed the person into the show which is actually the best scenario possible, because they will show up fuller with the same level of leanness and that's actually what we want. And if you can schedule that in, that's ideal, but if I could just select the timeframes based on the best outcome, I would say most people do pretty good with two refeeds per week right from the beginning.

I've started with one refeed usually, but this contest prep season with all my athletes I do two refeeds per week, basically you just eat at maintenance levels so they are more satiated and they actually have less stress overall with those two refeeds, because 24 hour refeeds as you know have shown that they don't really do that much and once you're over 48 hour period much more positive things happen with the body when you do a refeed. So that is one thing that I do right from the beginning of the contest prep.

And another thing I would do is I would try to bring them up to maintenance like ideally every eight weeks if that is possible, but once again this is not set in stone and life happens basically, so very often you have to just react to what happens in their life, what happens in their training and what happens with their overall stress level. So some people you can push very hard for like 20 weeks straight and then you just give them a one week diet break and other people you have to take diet breaks of two

weeks like every six weeks. It's very, very individual and it really depends on the person.

Another thing that should probably be mentioned here is that the difference between weight loss, overall weight loss between male and female is very, very different. Men usually lose a lot more overall weight than what women do during contest prep. Like I currently coach a figure client and she's very close to contest shape right now and she's lost an overall of 3.5 kilograms since February. Yeah that's almost nothing and she looks like a completely different person, she's almost there. She probably needs to lose like half a kilogram and she's in contest shape. So that would be like a little over four kilograms lost in that long timeframe and she's ready. So it's not like we've just gotten rid of a little bit of fat from her legs, she's in contest shape, so you really have to consider that as well when you look at how much is the person going to lose per week along those timeframes.

Danny Lennon: All right so just to clarify with the refeeds, those two days per week are two days back to back?

Valentin Tambosi: Yes, that's very important, exactly. I state that specifically to my clients. It's not going to be Monday and Wednesday, it's going to be Monday and Tuesday or it's going to be Wednesday and Thursday, because those have to be back to back and you really want to be in that recovered state. You want to create a recovered state with those two refeeds back to back.

Danny Lennon: All right. You mentioned that kind of difference between male and female athletes in terms of the absolute amount of weight that tends to be lost. Are there any other considerations when setting out whether that comes down to timeframes for the contest preps or the off-season or anything else because I'm sure you get that question quite a lot. Is there any major differences between the two?

Valentin Tambosi: Except from the overall weight lost within the prep, I would say that women generally lose slower, that's basically it. With most males, you can aim for like one percent of the body weight per week at the beginning and then it slows down considerably to like 0.1, 0.2 something like that. There's no way you lose one percent of your body weight at the end. And with females it starts out way lower. It's like 0.4, 0.5 percent of their body weight at the beginning and then it slows down to almost nothing at the end.

That explains why they would lose so much less overall body mass, yeah.

Danny Lennon: Right. When it comes to the contest preps, particularly the further and further you get with the training considerations for the athlete, how do you manage volume and intensity and maybe even exercise. So actually we can talk about separately, but particularly with volume and intensity, what do you mainly modify the further they get through a prep?

Valentin Tambosi: Yeah. I would have to say volume is the biggest factor, because you can just do less in that state. That's just going to be a reality and doing more and more sub-maximum work is just going to tear you down even more when you're in that particular shape. So that's probably what I program in the most that I auto regulate how much the volume fluctuates from session to session and you just have to be very careful if the person is just not wanting to push anymore or if the person is so fatigued and so stressed out that they can't handle that much volume anymore.

So that's where a coach comes in, I mean that's where you have to read between you're the lines and understand your athlete and know your athlete and know is that too much or are they just trying to be lazy and for lack of a better term and try to get rid of that much work, because at a certain level your fatigue is going to be so high you just want to lay on the couch, that's it. You don't want to do five sets of squats, so are five sets of squats appropriate? Are three sets of squats appropriate? You just have to know the person and that takes time to get to know that person and over a course of collaboration in a contest prep, you know sooner or later if that person can handle that amount of volume or not.

And it very often just is mirrored by their performance and their numbers. I have all my athletes locked trainings because I know what's happening, even though they lose strength throughout the contest prep which is very often the case, I want to know how much weight they're moving so I can adjust their training and know what symbolizes best at that particular time.

Danny Lennon: All right with exercise selection obviously that is quite an individual thing, but there's probably some again general guidelines that you can follow as well. Are there any major differences between when someone's deep in a contest prep verses when that same athlete is outside of the contest prep in

terms of -- or at least your thought process for how they should go about exercise selection, what you tend to put in or take away or substitute in?

Valentin Tambosi: Yeah generally speaking, the difference is zero and I wouldn't look for exercises that have like less of a stretch component for example because it's much more likely to tear a muscle or something like that, you very often hear that and I think when execution is on point and you're properly warmed up, there's not really a reason why a muscle should tear more easily because you're leaner. There's not really any logic to that in my opinion. So basically exercise selection stays the same and the goal within a deep deficit is still to build as much muscle as possible because what's the best recipe to maintain muscle tissue? It's to try to build more muscle.

So if we are looking at appropriate protein amounts and heavy enough lifting, we should protect muscle the best way possible, but as far as exercise selection goes, I'm keeping it very, very simple and I don't really introduce any new funky exercises because I think the athlete will thrive on the exercises they know the best and they have known the best since their off-season and why not continue to work with those exercises to do what we came here to do.

Danny Lennon: Sure so with that then by the time they get towards the end of the prep, the main thing comes to work the kind of execution which includes not only the show, but the week leading up to it which different people have very different understandings of what they should be doing. For your athletes, how do you approach that kind of final run-in to the contest and what are the main things they should have in mind?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure, so often there's a peak week which has both training modifications and nutrition modifications for most coaches and what they do with their athletes and I am being more and more minimalistic when it comes to that particular week because I think the less you change, the better. And obviously there are some manipulation you do with their nutrition to make sure they show up full on stage and increase their carbohydrates and stuff like that.

As far as training goes, I'm more and more of the opinion that you should change as little as possible and just train as heavy as

possible up until the show. That doesn't mean you should do like six sets of squats the day prior to the show, but that means you should be very mindful of what got you here and that's not really some super set pump up stuff that you do from Monday to Friday and just try to deplete glycogen levels, it's basically just heavy lifting and you just do that within that week in a very safe way and schedule it appropriately.

So one thing you could do and you often hear this is that people schedule the leg workout one week before the day on stage, so I can't go along with that especially the much fatigue that you generate from a leg workout that would make a lot of sense, but apart from that I would train pretty regularly right until Thursday if we're talking about a Saturday show. So this is probably the most boring answer possible because people very often like to tinker around the last week of training and in my opinion they just overdo it. They introduce new stressors that person is not used to: higher [indiscernible 00:42:46] and that volume they do with all the depletion workouts and they probably don't show better just because it's a peak week.

And as far as nutrition goes, after many approaches, there's many things you can do. You can frontload the person, backload, you can do a very slow increase in carbohydrates every single day. There's many things you can do and it really, really depends once again on the person and what works best for them.

And one thing I want to mention here as well is character. A lot of people freak out when they read a peak week, when they hear, "Oh my God, this is the last week of training and nutrition before my show," so for those people especially you want to actually keep everything the same because they want to do so much better mentally because they're not freaking out because of this one week and they completely forget the 20 weeks prior to that what got them here and they only focus on this week and then they completely freak out when they miss like one serving of salt or something like that, yeah.

Danny Lennon:

Yeah I think that's definitely the case that people can kind of pile on this fake pressure on top of themselves and just make things worse. In relation to the carbohydrate intakes, that's probably at least from a nutritional standpoint probably one of the more important things for them to pay attention to or it's the one that

pretty much everyone is going to do some sort of manipulation with.

So you mentioned a few different types of approaches that different people can take. Maybe could you just give an overview of what some of those approaches actually entail, what they look like and what considerations might let someone pick which is best for which type of athlete or so on?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure. So I've mentioned a front and a backload, so those are probably the most two popular approaches to load somebody for stage. And basically load always means you load with water, salt and carbohydrates. So you need those three to have a full muscle cell. So with a front load, I would say this is the more conservative approach to the whole thing, because you do it at the beginning of the week. So an example if we're talking a Saturday show, the person would for example do a two-day load on Monday and Tuesday. That allows for any spilling to dissipate on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and the person has still some full muscle glycogen stores and they would basically -- it's a very safe approach to the whole thing, because if there's anything going wrong, you still have three days to recover from that, but if we're talking a backload, it's going to be on Thursday or Friday and on both days and you have to know how the person reacts to carbohydrates and those water and salt amounts.

So I would use a frontload with somebody I have not worked with before or somebody I don't know how they use two refeeds. But then again if you're using weekly refeeds, that's like you're rehearsing the peak week already right? So that's why a two-day refeed especially back to back are so valuable because you can always see how the person reacts to carbohydrates, maybe not to those high water amounts you use for a load, but you can still see if they spill, you can see if they feel bloated, you can test certain foods how they react to and have a very good idea when you go into your front or backload, what's going to happen. But usually I would start everybody with a frontload because I know exactly how they're going to react and if something goes wrong, I still have those three days to recover from that.

And once I know the athlete better, I can go into backloads because now I know, "Okay we're going to look on point with lets say 500 grams of carbs on two days and eight liters of water, like for example. And once I have that information, it is very easy to

navigate through such a backload, right? And most people think it's this fragile thing and it's actually very – it can calculate everything and I really know how the person is going to wake up the next morning and when they send me pictures, they most often look exactly how I expected them to look because we've tested it before.

So there's not really any surprise going on there and I mean most people do -- I think the general message of this is most people do too much. They load too much and they deplete too much and they just try to wrap something into this last week that's not really going to be there. So do the work in those 24, 26 weeks prior to that and then just add like those last one percent to the peak week and that's going to be it. Don't try to be a hero.

Danny Lennon: Right yeah. When the work is done, I guess I think something you had said before is that the people are spending most time doing the craziest stuff in that last week are going to be the ones that are probably the least prepared because they're already panicking and they haven't got that work done prior to that week.

Valentin Tambosi: For sure and one more thing I want to mention is that people underestimate how much thinking about what could go wrong impacts the stress levels. So I've seen people that had perfect refeeds, they had a picture perfect frontload, everything was going smoothly and just because their mindset was in wrong place and they thought about everything that could go wrong which did not go wrong, they showed up watery, they showed up not in shape, they showed up not looking how they could look and very often people say, "Men, I looked great two days prior to the show or two days after the show, what happened?" Well, it was just the way you thought about everything and that can impact you greatly especially on the day of the show. If you stress out about every little thing, it's going to show on stage and you want to avoid that, so control yourself.

Danny Lennon: We're coming close to time so maybe one final thing that I do want to ask before we wrap up, earlier you mentioned the importance of ideally what you like to do after a contest and getting that person getting a better relationship with food again, getting back into the condition before they really start growing again in the off-season and laying out what ideally we'd want them to do, slightly separate, but on that same note, in terms of knowing what we want them to do from a coach's perspective,

what does that kind of conversation look like with the athlete after they've done the show, the weekend has passed, you're coming the next week and you sit down to talk to them about, "Okay, the next thing from here," what does that typical conversation go like?

Valentin Tambosi: Yeah usually the conversation goes like this, the athlete is very motivated to get back into building muscle again. And the first thing you have to say is, "That's not going to happen for like a few months." You're not going to build a single grain of muscle, because you're just so fatigued from the deficit that you have to take it easy now and this is probably one of the hardest things for an athlete to hear who just stepped on stage and probably had a great season and they just want to get right back into it and this is not going to work. It's not going to work even for somebody who's highly motivated individual or a genetic freak or whatever. You just have to take it easy for at least eight weeks I would say for most people and after those eight weeks when the person understands that those eight weeks are necessary and they just have to wait until everything settles down again and they feel relatively normal again.

And just drilling that into their heads that they have to be patient is probably the most important thing I think because I know for myself last year I had my last show in August and I felt normal again in January of this year. So it was a very long time until everything felt good again in training and everything. And people just have to understand that patience is a good thing in that case and you can't just go back into training and hammer high training volumes and stuff like that. It's not going to work, so don't shoot yourself in the foot and just stay patient.

Danny Lennon: Excellent advice. Before I get to the very final question Valentin, where can people find you on social media, on the internet, anywhere they want to go if you want to check out you or your coaching or anything like that?

Valentin Tambosi: Sure probably just go to my website which is my name valentintambosi.com and go to my Instagram account, I'm not really that active of Facebook anymore and it's just the same one on Instagram, it's just my name and that's it yeah.

Danny Lennon: Correct. I'll link that in the short notes for everyone listening and with that we get to the final question we always end the show on

which can be with anything outside of what we talked about today, if you could advice people to do one thing each day that would have a positive impact on any area of your life, what would that one thing be?

Valentin Tambosi: That would be to read every single day. I know some people on the show have probably said that already, but in 2015 I started doing that every single day and I can it changed my life, it changed how I think about things and how I approach my day and I would do that and a lot of people, even if it's just 15 minutes of reading every single day, it will – first of all you're going to read a whole lot of books, you're going to know a lot of shit, so that's good. And it's just going to spark that idea every single day and I think that's a great way to start your day.

Danny Lennon: Awesome. Thank you man. That was a great conversation. We're up on time already. It went quick which is a good sign, so thank you so much and I will talk to you soon.

Valentin Tambosi: Thanks Danny

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