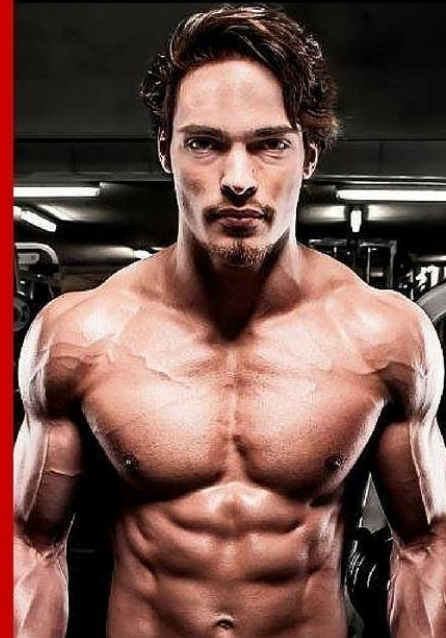


# Menno Henselmans

## Menno's Contest Prep, Ab-Libitum Dieting & Making Fat Loss Manageable



Episode 130



Danny Lennon:

Hello and welcome to Sigma Nutrition Radio. My name is Danny Lennon and today you are listening to Episode 130 of the podcast. For those of you that are maybe new to the show, first of all, you're very welcome, and just to give you a brief background, this podcast is the one that's going to give you access to weekly in-depth interviews with leaders in evidenced-based nutrition and its related fields. For those of you who are regular listeners, then I just want to say thank you so much for again downloading the show and for your continued support. It's what makes this podcast keep on rolling and keep on growing, so thank you so much. It honestly means a lot.

On today's episode, I'm going to be joined by Menno Henselmans, the man behind Bayesian Bodybuilding. Menno is just an awesome guy. He's just completely unique in his approach to thinking about various issues in training and nutrition, and his deep understanding of science and research and statistics underpins a lot of his work. And it's really thought-provoking stuff, high-quality work that he puts out, and really one of I would say the top guys in the field now putting out quality information and it's always great to discuss different things with Menno.

The show notes to this episode are going to be available over at [SigmaNutrition.com/episode130](http://SigmaNutrition.com/episode130), and there I'm going to link to anything that gets mentioned in today's show, provide more info about Menno's

background, and you can also get a transcript of this episode there as well. And with that, let's get into this week's episode.

Hey Menno, welcome back to the show. How are you doing, my man?

Menno Henselmans: I'm great. You?

Danny Lennon: Yeah, I'm doing really well and looking forward to getting into a bit of discussion here.

Menno Henselmans: Mm-hmm.

Danny Lennon: But before we get into any kind of specific topics, I'm sure a large number of people listening already know who you are and a bit about your work, but for those who maybe are not as familiar or who have not come across it yet, could you perhaps just give a brief rundown of who Menno Henselmans is and what you're all about?

Menno Henselmans: Sure. Basically, I'm known for my Bayesian Bodybuilding method. I currently do online coaching, some fitness modeling, and I have a Bayesian PT course where I educate personal trainers with my method, and probably the thing that would separate me from most people is that I base these methods on what I learned as a business consultant and an economist. So my training in statistics, economics and behavioral economics, I apply this to fitness and nutrition, and basically that gives a kind of different perspective where it's very evidence-based, very scientific, but also practical on many topics in this area.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, perfect. And for anyone listening who didn't hear Menno's first appearance on the podcast, I'll link up to that and you can go back and delve a bit more into the Bayesian kind of philosophy that Menno brings, which will give you a bit more context. But for this particular discussion, Menno, I think first off, recently you competed in Men's Fitness I think in Orlando, was it?

Menno Henselmans: Yup.

Danny Lennon: Which I hadn't seen you really mention publicly at least too much in the lead-up to that event and only had seen you mention it afterwards. So how did the day go itself and what was the driving reason behind you going and deciding to compete?

Menno Henselmans: Right, right. So when I started cutting at least, I wasn't intending to compete, but things went very well and at some point I basically found out

that I was at the level where I usually had photo shoots. And I was still using ad-libitum dieting, which means I wasn't tracking my macros at all, just eating as much as I wanted basically, of course with very meticulous food choices and timing—it's not like you can just binge on pizza—but I wasn't tracking my macros or anything and it was fairly effortless, so I decided at that point that I would take the next step. And then I still wasn't really interested in competing also because at the time I lived in Ecuador and there was simply no way, no competition there or anything, well, professionally for bodybuilding, really.

At that point, I basically thought, "Okay, I'm going to take the next step for me as a fitness model and I'm going to diet down to the level where I have completely striated glutes." I was just going to see basically what rock bottom is for me in terms of fat percentage. Well, that also went well. So then when I was in Brazil I wanted to compete there in classic bodybuilding and men's physique, probably cross over, because I don't really have the body type for classic bodybuilding, so men's physique would probably fit better. But I was also focusing on leanness and conditioning, so men's physique probably wasn't too suitable either. But the main reason I wanted to compete other than that I was basically already in contest shape is that I normally do photo shoots and I prefer that because I like the art of creation, basically, really creating an aesthetic image, in which way I consider a photo shoot basically like art, and I don't really have the competitive aspect, which is what competing is more about. But, since I have many clients that do compete, I basically thought, "Well, I just need to do it." It's something that as a coach that I have coached people in I think literally every division for both men and women, I've coached national champions, and I haven't competed myself. That's just...that can't be. So that's the reason I competed mostly, to really gain this experience for myself, and in that respect I think it went well.

Danny Lennon: So just I'm really intrigued by the ad-libitum dieting aspect of this because I'm sure for—me included—I think a lot of people listening this is probably a scenario where logically you'd think that it shouldn't work that well.

Menno Henselmans: Mm-hmm.

Danny Lennon: I mean, sure I can see how ad-libitum dieting and good habits, awareness of what you're eating can all be used to maintain a good physique and health, but when we take a scenario where we have a guy who is already lean and then we consider how the brain has this suite of responses to try

and keep our energy availability within a certain range, what do you think made it possible for you to essentially force your body to do something it didn't want...like taking less food than it wants? How did you maintain that ability to stay dieting without having to resort to, say, either tracking or recording food portions or meals or other typical strategies people would think needs to be used to diet to that level of body fat?

Menno Henselmans: This is something I learned most in this prep because I really ad-libitum dieting for obvious reasons, especially during traveling periods—and this wasn't a traveling period for me. I lived in—actually had to move a frustrating number of times. I think I moved 10 times or something during contest prep, so that really added to the stress. [Chuckles]

Danny Lennon: [Chuckles] I would imagine.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah. But I should note first that at the end I did have to resort to calorie tracking because I basically...I'd say that I can now attain men's physique kind of conditioning—that I could reach with ad-libitum dieting—but that next step, striated glutes, sick definition of your quads, veins on your hamstrings, just like a complete roadmap of veins, that level of conditioning I don't think I could do because I think I basically pull all the tricks I can think of and I learned a lot of new ones with the ad-libitum dieting this prep and I still didn't get there. I still had to resort to counting at the end.

Danny Lennon: So what type of structure did that diet take during that ad-libitum dieting phase? What sort of practices were you trying to be mindful of to...that was allowing you to stay within that caloric deficit?

Menno Henselmans: Right, yeah. Like I said, I pulled all the tricks I have out of the bag for this one. So I was drinking lots of calorie-free beverages, maintaining very consistent meal timing, I have to make sure that sleep is very, very sound – nine hours of like high-quality sleep every day. That's just the basics. I was thinking of my cutlery and trying to give myself visual illusions, for example, what kind of plates that you select...so that you make sure that we have certain amount of contrast with your food on the plate so that it appears larger. Many of those things have been found to subconsciously reduce your food intake because the brain perceives a meal as being larger than it is. So I was literally even selecting the cutlery for each meal. I was using a lot of things like apple cider vinegar, mustard. I even cycled chili pepper use because that's also an appetite suppressant, but you habituate to it, loses its effect. So I was using tons of herbs that have or at least are

believed to have appetite-suppressing properties. It's very hard to say anecdotally because I was using so many of them. Well, of course, a very high-satiety diet. I wasn't eating anything like even bread, rice. I think a funny thing is oatmeal. Many people eat oatmeal during their contest prep. That's not going to happen ad-libitum. You'll massively overeat. Lots of vegetables. Lean protein, of course.

And one thing that interestingly I tested, I'm not really sure on yet, is going super-high protein and at the other end going very low-protein. I'm inclined to say that going lower in protein, and by low I mean just getting to the optimal level of protein and not exceeding that, is most likely best, at least for me, in terms of satiety because protein...all protein sources are still very caloric, so they just rack up very fast compared to vegetables.

Danny Lennon: Just within that, once you had decided to include these different type of approaches and how you're going to structure things and had made these decisions, once you started putting them in place, as the days go by, did you get that feeling that you were still dieting or did it almost feel like you were just...? Once you had committed to sticking to those kind of I suppose rules, did it feel like you were actually under-eating or did it feel fine?

Menno Henselmans: I definitely prefer it to traditional macro tracking although like I said, it was basically a blend and at some point it was traditional macro tracking. But I definitely strongly prefer, especially in a contest prep kind of diet with a high amount of stress, to use ad-libitum dieting. Did I feel like I was dieting? Yes, for sure, because your food selection becomes very, very limited and even then you're still...you have to get into the mindset that you can't really pig out, even on the...even on vegetables. So in the last months, it was almost...it was certainly a dieting mindset. It's absolutely not like, "This is the magic fix. I found the recipe for contest prep without macro tracking that makes you feel completely normal during the entire prep." That's not the case. But I do think I learned a lot of things that make contest prep a lot more manageable for many people.

One particular thing that I learned this prep or learned a lot more about is how important the ordering of different foods in a meal can be because your appetite regulation is sensory-specific, which means that your bio response or your appetite, the feedback for your appetite, basically, or hunger, responds differently to different tastes. For example, if you eat something like a strawberry yogurt and you put that at the end of a meal, which is, I don't know, kind of fish with soy sauce, very salty kind of

meal, most likely you can still eat a lot of the strawberry yogurt because it's a complete different taste, different texture, sweet versus salty. Whereas if you either stick to one of these or often, especially if it's not a very large amount of...more like a dessert, you eat that first and then you eat the saltier meal that does fill you up entirely, most likely you're going to eat a lot less in that scenario as opposed to the scenario where you basically have dessert. In my PT course, I say that sensory-specific appetite regulation is basically the reason people always have room for dessert, which is for many people actually really true.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, it's interesting. I remember talking to Stephan Guyenet about a kind of related issue to this when he mentioned a whole area around palatability of foods, but then also like he mentioned that regulation and not only having foods that are hyperpalatable but even outside of that just having foods that are novel and new, when you combine many different types of foods in one meal, you're able to get more than if it's a very limited number of one or two kind of simple ingredients where you don't have massive variety in these different foods like you would have at a buffet or a plateful of various different things. So that kind of makes a ton of sense from that perspective. With that then, were there any other lessons that you learned that you hadn't expected to during going through that prep, anything that kind of jumped out as interesting? Or just even maybe you were predicting it, but something that happened during either that prep or competing that that experience taught you that you may start using more either with yourself or with clients?

Menno Henselmans: Mostly intuitive things. For example, in terms of satiety index, I learned that in many cases it doesn't really work. If you simply look at the determinants of the satiety index – protein, food volume, fiber, the traditional things you hear people talk about, certain foods are expected to perform a lot better than they do, fruits in particular. Things like watermelon, for example, which has a huge amount of food volume depending on the type of melon, you're looking at around 20 calories per hundred gram, so very low caloric density, but still it very often leads to overeating. And I don't even like melon, so palatability is not really the issue. Maybe due to viscosity actually, now that I think about it, because it's not dense enough. If you look at dairy, for example, just to illustrate what viscosity is, you have skyr and cheese and the very cement-like thick kind of dairy, and with the exact same macros you can also have an almost milk-like dairy product, more like yogurt, and it's very easy to determine for yourself that the more cement-like dairy product is often a lot more

satiating. Factors like these become very important and at the end you're looking at doing everything to, both psychologically as well as physically in terms of food choices, to minimize your own energy intake without being too consciously aware of it.

Danny Lennon: Yeah. So with something then like, if we took guar gum or something similar that would act as some sort of thickener and adding it into certain food choices, could that have an effect in that manner of trying to change the viscosity of a meal?

Menno Henselmans: Yeah, it could. There is a lot of research for example showing that for certain meals the soup variant of the meal is a lot more satiating than the ingredients in non-soup form, and this is also the case with many vegetables. Their texture is extremely important. Things like carrots and gherkins, for example, things that have a crunchy texture that doesn't have...it doesn't feel very rich, it's crunchy but it's not crunchy like most candy, so those things often can trigger your appetite a lot more in my experience than they really satiate. And I know a lot of people, with things like broccoli but even more so with carrots and gherkins and those kind of foods, if they eat them in just slightly boiled form or, even worse, in raw form, it's more of an appetite trigger than something that really satiates. Cucumber is another example. You can eat cucumber or at least I can eat cucumber till I'm blue in the face. At some point I just want to stop eating, not because I'm really satisfied but I just want to stop eating. But if I then have the option of switching to strawberries or something else, then I'm just going to basically have that meal as if I hadn't eaten any cucumber at all.

Danny Lennon: So when it comes to implementing this with either the clients or even people listening who are going to use it themselves or with their clients, it kind of reminded me of one thing when we get to this idea of...or that at least seems to be pervasive now that people have started to equate needing to track macros meticulously with any form of dieting for every single person, and it kind of reminded me of, I think it was a quote of yours that you put out online last year at some point essentially to the effect of "giving the average fat person a set of macros to follow is like telling a smoker to just quit smoking," and I kind of enjoyed that.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: Could you maybe just perhaps give some context on your thought process behind that for people on what you were trying to get across with that point?

Menno Henselmans: Right. That was basically a critique of If It Fits Your Macros because...or at least the cult like If It Fits Your Macros, which strongly exist on Bodybuilding.com in particular, who believe that "if it fits your macros, it's the cure" and macro checking is the answer, that it's all there is for dieting and it's what everyone should do. But like I said, things like Weight Watchers, for example, they are basically If It Fits Your Macros, just a dummy form of it, and if you look at the compliance records of these kind of diets or of macro tracking, calorie tracking in itself in overweight populations, it's just as poor as all the other diets basically. There is even some trend for diets, and this is where keto and Atkins can shine because they don't involve any kind of macro tracking but they, even if it's maybe misguided, they create a system for people to exclude certain food groups and make it very easy to ingrain certain habits so that they only eat these kind of foods. And up to a point, you'll lose a good amount of fat on the Atkins diet because what you're eating is still very caloric. Often for a strength trainee or especially doing contest prep, it's absolutely not going to cut it. But in its principle that it's easier to give people a system that they can relate to and that they understand or that they think they understand of why they eat this food and not that food, it is often more effective than just telling people, "This is your energy intake. Fill it up however you want," and not letting them focus on their food choices.

Danny Lennon: Yeah. I think what essentially a lot of time it comes down to is if you're just taking someone who maybe doesn't have good habits already or has experience tracking and has found it useful, maybe for that person it's not something they enjoy. So by trying to say you're making their diet more flexible and easy to follow, it actually can become more restrictive in itself because that habit of having to track things is actually quite difficult and restrictive for that person to do, and so it just adds another thing to the mix.

And I think particularly the reason why I liked what you were kind of framing that conversation around If It Fits Your Macros because for a large number of my own clients, they will track macros, they have prescribed ranges to fall within, but most of those people are those that have experience doing it who already have maybe healthy eating behaviors, so to speak, and the vast majority being athletes or coaches themselves and are to some degree relatively lean compared to most of the



population. So for them to have targets they can kind of find useful, but at the same time I'm very cognizant of the idea that's a strategy to be used for a specific goal in a specific isolated block of time, and the real goal of coaching should be to get people to learn enough skills about eating to be able to transition away from that if they want to.

Considering that I would say most of your clients are what we could describe as advanced or at least at the upper end compared to, say, most general dieters, what approaches then are you using with those?

Menno Henselmans: First, to get back on the example in my own clients as well of when macro tracking for almost every...or anyone basically is being taken too far is that a lot of my clients will report that they went out to a certain restaurant and then they get back with an estimate of how many calories were in it, and that to me is, I'm not sure if obsessive is the right word, but it's definitely not effective because, or at least for most people, you're not enjoying the meal as much when you're trying to track down all the ingredients, figuring out how many calories are in this, can I eat this, can I eat that, weighing it in your palm, how much bread is this. It's not a recipe for an enjoyable meal in every sense of the word. Not to mention that, if you look at the research, estimating the caloric content of a commercially prepared meal or a meal prepared in a restaurant, the estimates are all over the place. And even if you do, I generally tell people, "Add a 20% error margin if not more because that's routinely what registered dietitians still underestimate caloric intake by." That little sauce you use? No, 400 calories. The little oil in the pan that wasn't absorbed into the meal? Nope, another 400 calories. So those kind of hidden things can rack up very, very quickly and that's where people should definitely learn to use ad-libitum dieting.

So what I do with my clients—don't get me wrong, the vast majority, I still have them track their macros because, like you said, I think my prototypical client is basically an intermediate-level client that has the If It Fits Your Macros kind of things in order. They know to consume enough protein, they do strength training, they train hard, and they are looking to take it to the next level. That's basically the majority of my clients, and you have the competitors and the occasional beginner and stuff, but I'll have a lot of those and I definitely want people to get very good at tracking their macros. And it should be things like that, like the oil, and realizing that everything counts, basically. Even if you're not tracking it, you should have a very good idea of how many calories are in certain foods and in certain meals, and macro tracking is a very good way to learn

that. So if you haven't done that yet and you haven't really perfected macro tracking at a meticulous level, that's definitely something I recommend doing first before transitioning to complete ad-libitum dieting.

Also, to ingrain habits about making sure that each meal has a complete amino acid/protein source so that you get enough protein, etc. After that, if a client wants maximal progress, which a lot of my clients do—they pay me basically for maximal progression, and a lot of coaches that are more into the lifestyle perspective or, you know, Martin Berkhan as more of the approach that people go into a system and they already know sort of how things work and the coaching is more of integrating it very easily into your lifestyle, fitting in binge-drinking parties, that kind of stuff. My clients often are more interested in absolutely maximal progression, and then still macro tracking is the way to go because you have control over everything. My contest prep lasted about seven months and that was with all of complications and illness, so it could definitely have lasted not as long, and actually I was pretty much in contest condition for the last three months. But yeah, still the point is that with macro tracking you can always do better than with ad-libitum dieting because you have a lot more direct control.

When I've had a client for a couple of months usually, especially if they've reached their ideal body fat percentage and they know how the tools, they know how cutting, bulking, body weight composition, all that stuff, works, then I think it's often a good idea to transition into ad-libitum dieting so that they can learn to maintain their fat percentage long-term, and by long-term I mean years or even decades. So then we often transition to ad-libitum dieting so that they learn this and can do this for the rest of their lives without having to need me as a coach for their whole life.

Danny Lennon:

Yeah, I think that's really solid and I think that's what people miss with—probably the biggest upside of doing some type of macronutrient tracking is just the skill set that someone develops. And I often talk about a quote Alberto Nuñez used before of tracking macros so that you don't have to count calories for the rest of your life, and I think it kind of overlaps what you're talking about there, Menno, of when someone does go through that initial period with you of meticulous tracking, the things they learn about just what is going to give them X amount of protein in a meal, what these foods typically are going to do calorically, how all this stuff plays into—like you say, everything matters. Once they pick up all those skills and develop a better awareness, then they do have the ability then to eat ad-libitum and still understand or be aware of what's going on, whereas for

someone to try and do that without ever having tracked anything becomes a lot more difficult. And I think that's just a really nice concept for people to think about as opposed to this black and white idea of you either have to track every single macro all the time and that's the best way to go or no, you don't do that because it's being too neurotic and just only go intuitively, and I think both of those are kind of missing out on the bigger picture.

Menno Henselmans: And to give a nice example of the everything matters is vegetables, for example, a lot of people will say vegetables, they group it all together and either they don't count it at all or, what I often recommend, if they do that they use a certain figure. For example, for green vegetables, you can use any calories per hundred grams as a measure and you just lump it all together. But, for contest prep in particular, and for ad-libitum dieting even more so, you probably don't want to do this because the preparation method of vegetables, if you dry them, you take all the liquids and you're making vegetable chips and fries, that kind of stuff, then you're looking at a completely different satiety index for the food compared to its raw form or its form in soup.

Even more sneaky is certain herbs, for example. Herbs generally, because you use them only in such small quantities, may be considered a trivial contribution to your energy intake. But, especially when you're eating very large food volumes as you would do in contest prep on an ad-libitum diet, for cinnamon in my case, which I learned, is if you're actually going to count how much cinnamon you use, if you use as much as you want on, for example, just kind of baked grilled eggplant, sweet with cinnamon, truly awesome, and then you put Walden Farms Caramel Syrup on it...

Danny Lennon: Nice.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah, it's a good recipe, but, [chuckles] unfortunately the cinnamon, because it's a primary flavoring in this kind of meal, you don't want the bitter eggplant flavor to be the meal's flavor, you want it to be sweet and stuff, if you're going to use tons of cinnamon it really racks up quite fast because per hundred grams most herbs do in fact contain a lot of calories. They're close to being pure carbs. So then it's kind of like you're using sugar and you're thinking, "It's just a herb," but actually, if you look at your energy intake, it's pretty much like you're using sugar.

Danny Lennon: Cool. One other thing just on your prep, Menno, you mentioned there a minute ago about an illness during that and already we talked about

moving like 10 times during that whole process and I think earlier via email you were telling about a car crash as well.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: Can you just mention some of those things of what was going on? What was all that about?

Menno Henselmans: Alright, I'll deal with the alarming word "car crash" first. [Chuckles] It was a nice finisher. Well, actually, I still have a photo shoot next Wednesday and then I'm really done. But, as a finisher, right after the Orlando show, on the way home I actually crashed frontally into an old lady's car at close to 50 miles an hour. So, thank God for strength training, I was completely unscathed, but it was an old lady. She hadn't seen me at all and she crossed the road, which was basically a highway at about 50 miles an hour, so there was absolutely zero room to stop. The car was absolutely totaled. My girlfriend was in shock, but she was also relatively unharmed. She had a concussion and some joint issues and bruises and stuff. But yeah, that was a nice finisher to a...

Danny Lennon: Wow. [Chuckles]

Menno Henselmans: Especially late at night after a contest when you're looking to go home.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, what an end to the day.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah. So you also asked about the illness. That's really annoying because I still have it. I'm going to the doctor tomorrow. Seems that in either Ecuador or Brazil I got some kind of parasite or it's still not really known what was the cause, but I have idiopathic angioedema, which basically causes your eyelids to swell like hell.

Danny Lennon: Jesus. [Chuckles]

Menno Henselmans: And even worse, your abdomen from the inside as well. Hopefully, tomorrow when I go to the doctor we can figure out what it is. Actually, I went into the ER because one day I woke up and literally my eyes were almost completely shut, so I had to put an icepack on my eyes just to see, to get the swelling down so I could do my work. But fortunately, I didn't really have any other symptoms. It was just like the swelling's there. I didn't really have any major complications, or some fatigue of course, but I was in contest prep, so hard to say if that was the cause things. And I have these things like increased appetite, yeah. I had a very high appetite but, again, I was in contest prep, so all these things are so aspecific. It's

hard to say anything about it. But, at some point the swelling was so bad that I went into the ER in Brazil, which was surprisingly good actually, and blood tests were done. Everything was normal. All hormones were normal, which was also good to know. Funny enough, well, sort of funny, my heart rate was in the 30s and that was...

Danny Lennon: Wow.

Menno Henselmans: ...while I was on stimulant. So I had a shitload of caffeine before that.

Danny Lennon: [Laughs]

Menno Henselmans: And [laughs] she measured my pulse normally. My heartbeat is so strong that if you put your hand on my chest you can easily feel it. Actually, just a finger on my chest is enough to easily monitor my heart rate because it's like a cannon in my chest and I'm also usually hot all the time, but that was also completely gone, of course, now a lot more cold-sensitive. But they looked at hormones and the reason I went to the ER is because the three primary reasons you would experience angioedema like I had are heart failure, liver failure and kidney failure...

Danny Lennon: Oh, shit.

Menno Henselmans: ...all of which are of course very, very bad.

Danny Lennon: Yeah. [Laughs]

Menno Henselmans: But everything was normal, liver was healthy, kidneys were healthy, blood was good. Had EKG, urine testing, blood work. So they basically said, "Well, there's something seriously wrong, but everything looks fine on your readouts," and then of course they wanted to do more testing but that was going to be ridiculously expensive, so I was like, "I'm just going to see what happens and maybe I'll go to, if it's still there, I'll go to an American doctor or something." And it seemed to get better but there's still the occasional flare-up, so I really hope it's completely gone.

Danny Lennon: And as of yet there's no kind of known cause or reason why that's happening?

Menno Henselmans: The thing is, which is also what you read in all the medical literature on it, is that often it can be anything that triggers an allergy, any kind of compounds or—in Brazil and Ecuador, it could be anything any bacteria or could also be foods, but by now I think I've eliminated and retried every single food that I was eating over the last months several times now, but

that's also tricky because the medical reports say a lot of people do this and they never figure out what it really was because you have these delayed responses, and then if you eat a certain food it can trigger a reaction in seven days instead of right now. So, it's kind of hell to figure out what it really is. But it seems to be getting better now and there's a good chance it's something inherent to either Ecuador or Brazil, which would mean that now that I'm back in the Netherlands it should get better, and it does, it is quickly, or it is slowly getting better over time.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, hopefully that sorts itself out soon, man.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah. [Chuckles]

Danny Lennon: It doesn't sound nice at all. And so with that going on, did it kind of deter you from what you were trying to do during that prep in terms of did it have any increase in how likely it was you were going to kind of deviate away from your plan or just feel like not doing it because you felt so bad from the illness and...?

Menno Henselmans: The worst is, in the end it didn't deter me from anything, but the worst part about it was the uncertainty of the whole period, actually, because often I didn't know where we'd be living next month or next week even, and you combine that with the uncertainty of the shows as well—because like I said, I was originally intending to compete in Brazil in classic bodybuilding and men's physique but that didn't work out because of bureaucratic issues, so that's why I actually picked the Orlando WBFF show—with that uncertainty and then also the uncertainty of, you know, am I messing my health big time here, is really something that you don't want during contest prep but I did have it, so nothing you can do about that. And it was very reassuring that, which is also why I told myself I don't have anything that's going to kill me, basically, because my vital organs are all perfectly fine, very healthy in fact, so I just got to weather it and hopefully it goes away on its own or we'll see. But it was very annoying or the first photo shoot as well because I had to cut a ton of water because the angioedema also makes you hold a lot of water. Some of it isn't really fluid because it's some type of protein that has deposited around your eyelids or something, nasty stuff, but a lot of it is water so you can mitigate it with the water cut in your peak week, which I did. But then I had to cut so much water that I was cramping up so badly during my photo shoot that it's like, okay, I really hope I don't have to do this every time I have a photo shoot or contest now.

Danny Lennon: [Laughs] And presuming then if there is some edema around the abdominal region as well like you're mentioning, that maybe was then obviously another sort of stress I suppose in that, "I'm getting leaner, I'm doing all these things, but by the time the show comes around, if I have this extra swelling around, it could be essentially for nothing."

Menno Henselmans: For sure. That's, well, so really annoying because I was monitoring my body fat percentage with my waist measurements. Well, that was obviously confounded. I was using calipers as well and normally those are not that sensitive to water retention, but with the kind of edema I had they were, so again, confounded. And then, I also had bioelectrical impedance analysis; that's also very sensitive to water retention levels. So there were a lot of weeks when it was really difficult to figure out what I had to do with my calories, and you can also see at a certain point was like I have no idea now if I maybe actually go up or down or... I ended up needing to go down to 1800 and at some point actually reached an all-time low in body weight, which I haven't been since I was 16, I think, at 77 kilos, but that was after very bad dehydration and diarrhea and generally not feeling too great. But at that point, I actually basically lean-bulked into the WBFF show, because some of the pictures you'll see posted on Facebook like of my quads, when I was actually lean and I'm doing my show. That was alright because for men's fitness and the WBFF, like with men's physique, you don't have to be as lean as for classic bodybuilding. So those sort of worked out but, yeah, hectic period.

Danny Lennon: Not that any of that stuff was ever good to go through, but do you think that just having all that stuff going on between the illness and moving house and being in a different country and all those different factors whilst having to go through some sort of contest prep, do you think that was almost better in terms of a learning experience of things you could pick up to help other people as opposed to having every single variable perfect or what on paper would look perfect?

Menno Henselmans: For sure. And also, I had to extend the cutting period for that long, so I know what it's like to be in contest shape for that kind of period and to very gradually have to lean-bulk out of it, because normally you have a lot more leeway after your contest, whereas I didn't and still don't until Wednesday. So, absolutely. And that's the whole reason I travel, basically. For those that don't know, I'm basically a nomad or a citizen of the world as some politicians like to say. I don't have a permanent residence anywhere, basically. I pretty much permanently travel around because I can do all the work I do as long as I have my laptop and Internet. And the

whole reason I do that is because of the life experience, and I think that's what life is about, getting, developing all these experiences. Even after the car crash, almost right after actually, there were all of these kind of voices inside my head saying it's kind of cool to actually experience this because, well, everything went well and, hopefully, if the insurance doesn't screw me over, then basically there wasn't any permanent damage of any kind to anyone, except the insurance companies. I don't empathize with those a lot. So there was no real long-term harm and it's another experience.

Danny Lennon: Right, yeah. I think just having that view on things is huge because I often talk to people about whatever experience does happen, it's very easy to look at it from two very different perspectives and that often shapes how we end up either learning or just feeling bad about something. So as opposed to being really stressed out and angry or whatever about that crash the whole time, instead, if you just reframe that and say, "Well, number one, look, I got through this. I'm kind of uninjured. No one's in bad condition or critical or dead or anything like that. Look how worse it could have been," and then seeing it as well as just another kind of crazy life experience and a good story to tell I think is so much more beneficial than what's the kind of easy default for people to go and start complaining about this and that their car is totaled and all that sort of thing.

Menno Henselmans: Yeah, that's exactly the mindset you need I think in life, overall.

Danny Lennon: So Menno, we'll start wrapping things up here because we're just coming close to time, and before we get to the final question maybe you can let people know where they can find you online or let them know anything you want them to check out.

Menno Henselmans: Sure. They can follow me on Facebook as well as Twitter and my website. If you google Bayesian Bodybuilding on Twitter, Facebook or Google or whatever search engine you use, but you should use Google—advertisement—then you'll find it, or my name, Menno Henselmans, you'll also find it.

Danny Lennon: And I'll put links to it in the show notes for everyone listening if you do want to check those out. And Menno, that brings us to the final question we'll end the podcast on and it's simply, if you could advise people to do one thing each day that would improve their life in some aspect, what would that one thing be?

Menno Henselmans: Alright, I'll keep this brief but I was thinking actually of making this a Facebook post, but I'll just share it now. Basically, the vision I have on life



probably because I was trained as an economist is that you can think of every day as either an investment day or as a consumption day, and a day is an investment day if above all else you basically do something and the next day you are closer to your goals or whatever you want to achieve in life, than you were yesterday. So if you do that one thing that's a good investment for the future, that doesn't help you now but it's for the future, then it's basically a good day. Investment days are good days. If you didn't achieve such a thing, then you better make it a consumption day, which means that what you did today, either you're still the same way off or you're a bit further away from your goals, but at least you enjoyed it a lot. Those are consumption days. And just like with a budget, you want to make sure that basically you maintain credit over your life and you want to have a lot of investment days, and that one thing is actually in itself the thing that I would do. Every day you should do, you should make one investment. You should do one thing that puts you closer to where you want to be in life, not for today or tomorrow, but long-term.

And then often you will find that it really only takes one thing, because if you do one good thing every day, maybe something you don't want to do or something that's productive, something that really needs to be done, then over time that really racks up and you'll find that, many days, that's really all it takes. One good thing, one investment every day, over the long-term amounts to a hugely productive life.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, I love that so much because that's essentially anything that happens is from doing those things consistently that end up compounding over time as opposed to one big grand gesture every now and again, and usually nothing really comes from that. It's more like you said, doing something consistently all the time that's going to push you slowly in that direction.

Menno, that's a perfect way to round off this show. I want to say thank you so much for taking the time out to do this and for the great information. Thank you so much, man.

Menno Henselmans: Alright.

Danny Lennon: And that is our interview. I hope you enjoyed this discussion as much as I did. I'm sure you took a ton of value from what Menno had to say. Remember that the show notes are going to be over at [SigmaNutrition.com/episode130](http://SigmaNutrition.com/episode130), and if you do enjoy the podcast then please help support it by sharing this episode on social media or leaving a review on iTunes or even becoming an official patron of the show at

[Patreon.com/sigmanutrition](https://Patreon.com/sigmanutrition). And all those things are significant to me. Every single post you put out and every single review I read and massively appreciate, and it does wonders to help this show continue to grow and to continue to get more people involved in hearing evidence-based information. So, thank you for everyone that continues to support the show and continues to drive it on and continues to push on evidence-based messages, and for any of you who are considering on supporting the show in whatever means you are able to.

So for anyone that wants to keep up with the latest awesome content from both Sigma Nutrition and just around the web, I'd like to point you towards the Sigma Synopsis, which is a short list of awesome content you'll be sent just once per week so that you can pick and choose some great information to read or to watch or to listen to. There will be a summary of that week's podcast, a recommended article from somewhere on the web, a video recommendation of the week, often a random resource recommendation, and then one quote or one lesson to bear in mind for that week, and you'll get that once a week just on a Friday, no other spam, no other sales pitches, nothing like that. That's just that information sent to you once per week. So if that sounds something that might be of interest to you, then if you just go to [SigmaNutrition.com](https://SigmaNutrition.com), just scroll down to the bottom of the page, you should see a place there to join the Sigma Synopsis list for free.

And that's us for this week. I will talk to you in the next episode and, until then, have an awesome week.