



## Legendary Strength Podcast Episode 18

### Travis Stoetzel

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Logan: Welcome everyone to the [Legendary Strength](http://legendarystrength.com) podcast. Today, I have a special interview for you lined up. I have my new friend, my new partner in strength training, [Travis Stoetzel](#), on the line. Thanks for joining us, Travis.

Travis: Hey! Thanks for having me, Logan. Like I was telling you before, I really enjoy doing these interviews and happy to be on your call here, man.

Logan: Yeah, our mutual friend, Tyler, introduced us and once I saw some of the things you could do, I was like you'd be a good guy to have on here so I want to get into some of your training information today.

Travis: Definitely, man.

Logan: So for people not familiar and actually I don't know that much of your back story myself, could you go into a little bit of how you got into training and all that stuff, without taking up the entire 30-minute call?

Travis: Sure, I'll do like the five-minute version. Basically just looking back at the way I got started, I got started at a real early age. My dad got me into a lot of bodyweight training. He got me into wrestling back when I was in fourth grade. I can't recall how old I was but he had me doing isometrics, a lot of

calisthenics, [pushups](#), [pull ups](#), sit ups, all that different stuff, and it just kind of grew on me. I enjoyed training from a young age.

Then he got me involved in weight lifting when I got in seventh grade. I started getting serious with that and then it just came along with playing sports in high school. I played football, wrestled, like I said, and baseball. Then on into college, I played baseball and football. When I graduated college, I played a few years of professional indoors football and tried out for some different NFL teams and things like that. So I stayed heavily involved with training.

After I was done, giving my all to try to play in the professional ranks, I decided to switch it around and step on the other side of the line and be the guy preparing people to take it to the next level, whether that be training for sports or just getting in better shape for fitness, for life, so I started training. I trained at a big Globo Gym and I was there for about close to three years when I finally got out of there.

Me and my best friend, Joe, we finally decided to leave the gym and started my own gym, *The Forged Athlete*. I've been in there for three years now and it's still growing and getting stronger every day. That's kind of where I am today. I own my own gym and we do all kinds of crazy stuff like train athletes.

I have a special deal with the military where I train marines. I get new enlisted marines ready to go for actual boot camp. So they come in and train in my gym, just different people like that, people that are serious about training. They want to train and just take their step to a new level and they love it. That's kind of where I am now with my training, man.

Logan: Okay, awesome. I got a few questions off of that. It sounds like you've been an athlete your entire life but back when you got started, your dad getting you started with that, would you say that really built the foundation for really having that strength and fitness throughout your life?

Travis: Definitely. It's hard for me to relate with people when they can't do one single pushup. This is something that just kind of pisses me off, when these Marines come in, we have these Marines like 17 and 18-year old kids, and they can't even do a set of five pushups with good form or they can't even do one single pull up. It just blows my mind because I was doing pull ups at a young age, fourth grade, just cranking out pull ups. It's hard for me to just kind of relate with that.

Just going back to that, it would just instill in me, real young, just to have that basic strength. You should be able to do pushups. You should be able to do pull ups. It serves as the basis to everything else that you do, strength-wise. I'm sure you know that as well as I do. If you can't do pushups, squats, pull ups, rows, different variations of body weight movements, you're just not going to be good to go lifting a barbell, lifting dumbbells, or anything like that. I mean bodyweight strength is just very, very important.

Logan: Yeah, and I completely agree with you. I came from the flipside of that. There was a point I was real weak growing up when my brother tells me—I don't remember this myself—he just started training me because he got into bodybuilding and all that. That's what he was exposed to back then. But there was a point when I couldn't do a pushup and I actually remember in eighth grade not being able to do a

pull up so I know that it can suck to be in that place. But wherever you start, you can build from there. I'm very interested, what sort of program do you put these Marines through?

Travis: Well, it's kind of controlled chaos, so to speak. When they first started coming to us, they didn't have any sort of program. Their recruiting officers were just kind of beating the crap out of them, so to speak, and there was just no rhyme or reason for what they're doing. They were just making—

Logan: Ain't that how the military goes with their training?

Travis: Yeah. So when I approach it, it's still a progressive sort of manner. I've got like 40 to 50 guys at one time so a lot of the stuff that I do is based around intervals. We'll do a lot of bodyweight stuff. We'll work some sandbags.

As far as resistance goes, we'll just do a lot of partner training. So I might have a guy carrying a guy on his back. Once they get up to a certain level, they can start doing squats with their partner, lunges, stuff like that, but with that many people—I'm training 40 to 50 guys at one time—I set everything out at interval, like I was saying.

For example, just to give you a kind of a look at like a three-week program I might put them through, Week 1, we might be doing intervals, 30 seconds of work with 15 to maybe even 30 seconds of rest. Then we'll put them through a bunch of different variations of movements and stuff like that and then we'll come back Week number 2 and I'll increase that to 45 seconds of work and decrease the rest, maybe keep the rest at 30 seconds or maybe decrease it to 15 seconds. Then third or fourth week, kind of depending on how guys are progressing, we might go up to a minute a round, so 60 seconds of work with very, very short rest periods.

We get it pretty intense in there but one of the main things is I'm always focusing on with those guys is good technique because if they're training with the best technique they can, it's going to obviously make the exercise harder when you're using the correct technique and you know you're not as strong as you can be, whereas a lot of those military guys, when they're doing exercises, they're just trying to barrel through it so their technique and their form is just god awful. So that's one of the main focuses I really key in on with those guys. I would much rather have them do five solid pushups than like 50 half rep pushups that's not going to get them any better. So form and technique, we really focus in on that.

It's still really intense in there and that's kind of the way I approach it with the different intervals. We might do timed reps, like amp reps. That's like okay, you've got two minutes to bang out as many bodyweight squats or pushups or pull ups, different things like that. That's kind of how I approach that.

Logan: Cool. Yeah. When you've got large groups of people, just keeping everything on the time-based circuit interval status seems to work best. Okay, let's switch gears a little bit. Can you tell us about your current training, what your goals happen to be, and what you're working on?

Travis: Yeah. For me, I've been getting involved with just competing in CrossFit in the last couple of years. That's really evolved my training. Looking back a couple years ago, I was just really into the hardcore, garage warrior-type training. I actually went away from training with the barbell for a while. I was just doing a lot of kettlebell training, bodyweight training, and then doing stuff with the sandbags. I mean I got strong as hell. I was in insane shape.

Well, I was asked to do the CrossFit Open a couple of years ago and I was like *"Ah! This stuff will be easy. I'll just come in and dominate this stuff,"* and it just opened my eyes to some different weaknesses that I had. A lot of it had to do with just trying rep Olympic weightlifting and stuff like that. So a couple years back, I wanted to get serious with competing at [CrossFit](#) because it's something just to keep me going.

Since growing up, always being involved in a competitive sport, I've had kind of a lapse of time there where I wasn't involved in any type of competition or anything like that. I did a bodybuilding show and I did well in my show but it wasn't the type of training that I wanted to do. I just felt like my athleticism and that part of me was kind of going away so I turned back to the performance training.

Like I said my, training has really evolved in time. I'm doing a lot of stuff just to prepare myself for the CrossFit Open and the Regionals coming up. Like I said, in the last two years I competed I've gotten really close to making it to the actual CrossFit games. The way it works, if people aren't familiar, just in a nutshell is that you have to do the Open first. Then there's 17 different regions around the country and each region will take the top 60 guys. Then you've got to place in the top three at your region and in the top three going to the CrossFit games. That's the stuff that you see on ESPN and stuff like that. It's super competitive.

What I've been doing is kind of like I mentioned earlier, controlled chaos so to speak. With CrossFit you're kind of training for the unknown. It's like, what are they going to make you do for this next workout? A lot of times, I just think they're seeing how close they can get you to death. You've got to have a high level of conditioning, a high level of strength, and you've got to be very efficient in the movements.

So one of my main focuses has just been to hone in on my Olympic lifting because I feel the better I can become as a lifter, with the snatch, the clean and jerk, and things like that, that's going to cross over to everything else that I do like back squats, front squats, deadlifts, all that stuff. Since I've done that, since I've focused more in on my Olympic lifting, all my other lifts have improved a ton without putting too much focus in on that.

Programming-wise, I zero in on a main move three different days a week so I've still got heavy squats in there, heavy overhead pressing, and then deadlifting. For deadlifting, I'd focus on speed so I'm doing a lot of band pulls, deadlifts with chains, things like that. Then I'll mix in Olympic lifting pretty much every day, four times a week at least, and different variations of the clean and jerks or snatching, assistance work, and stuff like that.

As far as my conditioning goes, that's when I have fun, so to speak. That's where I mix in the kettlebells, the bodyweight work, and just kind of the crazy, insane workout type stuff like Thursday throwdowns and things like that that I do weekly on my blog. That's where the conditioning aspect comes in. That's kind of how my training has evolve over time.

Logan: Okay, cool. With the Olympic lifts, that's something I haven't spent a lot of time on. I figure at some point in the future but it's such a technical thing. Like you were saying, you're training at four times a week, really groove in that technique and to do it. Could you go into a little more detail on that? How heavy are you going? What sort of work are you doing, that sort of thing?

Travis: Yeah, definitely. Well, my high school as far as Olympic lifting goes, I was lucky where my football coach in high school was relatively good with the Olympic lifts. We really did have many progressions with him. He just had us power clean, clean and jerk, and stuff like that. Not too much detail so I built up a lot of bad habits but I still generally knew how to do the Olympic lifts growing up. As I've been doing them, I just had to break free of a lot of bad habits.

Typically if you're looking at my schedule, Mondays I'm always starting out with the snatch and I'm usually doing a full snatch with that. I'll try to get as heavy as I can every Monday, since I'm fresh on Monday. I give myself about 15 to 20 minutes and I'll hit singles, I'll hit singles, and I'll hit singles. I'll just try to build up to the heaviest weight I possibly can for snatches to kind of set up my week. I'll come back in and I'll do some power clean and jerks.

Then I usually take Wednesday off as far as Olympic lifting goes. Thursdays, I take off totally. Fridays, I come back and I do stuff from the hang position so I'll do hang snatches or hanging cleans, or I'll do stuff from blocks so I'll do high hang snatch or high hang clean from the blocks. That's really helped out a ton. Growing up, I never did any work from the blocks. For anybody listening to this call, I would definitely learn how to do snatches and cleans from the block, above your knees. Really that's where the key is, getting that barbell to your hips.

When I was younger, I was always muscling the weight up. That was one of the biggest issues with me with Olympic lifting. I was trying to muscle the weight with my upper body. The Olympic lifts are just total hips. It's about bar positioning so that the work from the blocks has really helped me out a ton.

Typically, Saturdays I'll come back in and I'll kind of test myself out. It just kind of depends. I'll usually build up to a heavy one rep clean and jerk on Saturdays and then I'll just kind of blend in snatch work within my workout for that stuff. That's basically what a typical week looks like for me.

Logan: Okay. So just to clarify, you're doing CrossFit and I guess the main thing that people know CrossFit is like the workout of the day and you're not really doing that. You have programming to work on your weaknesses and within your conditioning, you really mix it up within that but for the most part, like the strength and skill work, that's fairly well laid out?

Travis: Yeah. Basically, what I'm doing for myself that I've been seeing the most progress with, like I mentioned, I've been doing CrossFit for the last couple of years, kind of my own method so to speak instead of doing the randomized workout of the day. Because I tried doing that for a couple of months and really I just dropped off across the board. My strength went down.

You know as well as I do you have to have some sort of structure when in order to gain strength. You have to have some sort of progressive system so typically what I do are six week blocks where I'm focusing in on different main movements, like I mentioned.

I'll do a block of just heavy squatting work so I'm going to build up in percentages. I keep that stuff the same so if you were to look at my workouts, it's like the top of the block. It's going to be main strength work and assistance work. It's always going to remain the same. The Olympic lifting might change up a little bit just based on the week and just kind of how I'm feeling.

Then the conditioning work, that's just going to be totally random. I'll just kind of throw it in there and like I mentioned. I'll be doing stuff like bodyweight and kettlebells. I might go to a track and I'm running 400s, 800s, blending that with kettlebells or doing stuff on bodyweight for that. But the main part of the workout that's the most important in my mind is building that max strength and that power work, keeping that consistent for at least six weeks, getting as much as you can get out of that for that six weeks, and then kind of rotating things after that six weeks.

Logan: Yeah, because you have to be consistent with something to really develop some strength that will last more than just *"I improved my technique a little bit."*

Travis: Yeah. definitely.

Logan: Okay. So it sounds like overall, you're training most days of the week. You're doing a lot of strength work with conditioning. Can you give any tips on recovery? What do you do for that so that one, you don't get injured but you're staying fresh and you're able to progress all along?

Travis: Yeah. Really when it comes down to recovery, that's the key to your overall training success, so to speak. For me, I treat recovery just as it would be another training session. So I'm constantly doing different stuff for mobility. I do a lot of pre-hab work. Before my workout, I'm going through a lot of different mobility stuff. I do a lot of stuff like lacrosse balls, soft tissue work, and foam rolling, different things like that. So I'm really just trying to keep myself as mobile as possible so I avoid getting stiff.

Post-workout, I'm always hitting mobility work. I'm always hitting soft tissue work so I'm hitting the areas that I typically strength train with. For example if I was just doing a heavy squatting day, I'm going to be hammering the quads, the glutes, and the hamstrings with the lacrosse ball and the foam roller, just keeping those areas mobile as best as I can.

Mobility work has been the biggest thing but as far as other points with recovery, you've got to make sure you're getting enough sleep. For me, competing in this CrossFit is an important thing to me so I'm

usually in bed by 9:30 or 10:00 o'clock. I'm up early every day. I'm up 4:45 or 4:30 three or four times a week, at least 5 o'clock in the morning on the other days that I'm not up at 4:30, getting up to train my early morning boot camps but sleep has got to be a main priority.

A lot of people talk about over training and honestly, I think it's really hard to over train yourself with just training. The problem that most people have is that they're under recovering so they're not getting enough sleep, they're eating like crap, they're not drinking enough water, and their post-workout nutrition sucks. You've got to put more focus in on just the basic recovery stuff so get enough sleep. I try to get at least six hours. I think when you combine that with solid nutrition, so eating lean, clean, and very nutritious foods.

I follow a [Paleolithic style diet](#). I kind of keep it to like a 85-15 or 90-10 rule, so to speak. 10% of the time, I eat whatever foods I want. Me and my wife go out and we'll get nice dinner here and there and I'll get the full course meal and two desserts. You can do that stuff when you stay fairly disciplined with your diet but diet's going to be a huge thing. A lot of people overlook that, and then hydration. Hydration is going to help you out big time.

One of the big things that I think has helped me as far as recovery is just alkalizing my body and focusing more in on mass. I'm constantly sipping on, for example, this apple cider all-natural drink. I drink that all the time. I'm always sipping on a green drink. You can't see it but I'm always sipping on some sort of green drink. Like athletic greens, I have that in the morning or I'll have that on my post-workout drink. Basically, since I've really focused in on alkalizing the body by increasing my intake of just green vegetables, fresh vegetables, and different things like that, it's just made a huge, huge difference in my ability to recover after workouts. Just hydration and alkalizing the body has really made a difference.

Logan: Yeah, that's good. That's not something that I've thought about in terms of recovery but it makes a lot of sense to do that. I do certain things for that but I think keeping that in mind is good for everyone to do. I really like a—I'm paraphrasing here, I forgot the exact quote—the legendary wrestler, [Dan Gable](#), you need to work as hard at recovering as you do at working out. I think that obviously you've found that to be very much true, especially when you're trying to compete at an elite level. Have you looked at doing different sorts of strength competition? I know there's not a whole lot of stuff out there but have you looked at doing anything besides the CrossFit games?

Travis: You know I've been thinking I've got to improve on my snatch but my clean and jerk is pretty good so I've actually thought about maybe doing some local Olympic lifting meets or something like that, just giving that a go. I've done some powerlifting meets. Back at high school, I did some powerlifting meets so those are some different things I've looked into and I might possibly be doing here soon.

Logan: It's a shame there aren't more available out there because you and I both know there's so much you can do with strength but it's somewhat limited in what you can do as far as competing. But as you

were saying, the whole aspect of competition, one, is a great thing to drive you to excel and get that performance and it's also a whole lot of fun to do. I like to try to compete in certain things but there just isn't too much out there. Maybe we need to fix that in the future and come up with some new stuff where people out there—

Travis: Create something, yeah. Definitely.

Logan: That would be a lot of fun. Well, we're coming up on the half-hour mark. Can you tell people who are listening about your website and maybe some resources that they may be interested in checking out?

Travis: Yeah, definitely. My website, just my personal blog is [TravisStoetzel.com](http://TravisStoetzel.com) and my last name is kind of crazy to spell. Like I said, that's my personal blog. I'm constantly updating that weekly. I've got a lot of stuff going on over there and I'm actually in the process of revamping that blog so it's going to be pretty kick ass when it's done. Things are going to be taking off big time over there but that's my main blog. People can kind of look back through the archives for different training information.

I'm constantly posting up different, like I mentioned, Thursday throwdowns. That's something I started about two years ago. I try to do it every Thursday but it's just kind of a quick fast workout challenge like I said. Typically, I'm doing those for conditioning sessions at the end of my main workout or it might be a full workout for that day so it might have a heavy strength—

Logan: Could you give an example of a recent one off the top of your head?

Travis: What did we do last week? Here's a fun one, one of my favorite ones. I basically took the power clean, this power squat clean thruster: Load up the barbell with your bodyweight, put five minutes on the clock, and get as many reps as you can do with that. I came up with a nickname for that. It's called the man-child's, which is basically a power squat clean thruster. You're starting with the barbell on the ground, you power clean it up, catch it in a squat, and press it overhead. So it's an all-in-one lift.

Logan: How many reps did you get in five minutes with your bodyweight on that?

Travis: You know now that I think about it I did, I want to say I did like maybe 20?

Logan: It's not an easy lift. Just hearing it, I'm kind of cringing like *"Oh, I don't want to do that"* but it sounds fun at the same time.

Travis: Again, it's an Olympic lift so I mean you're doing power squat cleans which is a pretty technical lift. Going back to what we were talking about at the very beginning with just like basic bodyweight strength, another very important thing is just mobility. Once you improve your mobility, lifts, all of the different Olympic lifts, are just going to improve automatically as well. So that's a huge thing.

That's something that I do weekly on my blog so it changes up all the time. People can check out my blog there. I got a membership site which is [TrainAggressive.com](http://TrainAggressive.com). That's just my membership site and



people can join that. I post up a different series of workouts. Right now, I'm posting up the exact workouts that I'm doing in preparation for the CrossFit Open and the CrossFit Regionals and stuff like that so people can see exactly what I'm doing. They can join in. There's a forum on there and they get access to me through my membership site. There are a lot of other people in there. If you like to train hard and get after it, that would be a good place for people to go. That's another resource.

Logan: Awesome. Well any final thoughts, anything we didn't cover that you'd like to add some ideas on?

Travis: Yeah. Just the only other thing is—I know you're well versed with this—when it comes to training and getting results, you could have the best plan in the world, you could have the ultimate blueprint or whatever, but what it all ultimately comes down to is your mindset. That's something that I talk about a lot.

My weekly newsletter, the email newsletter that I send out—I've actually started doing this for the last three or four weeks now—I call it *Mentality Mondays*. I just basically dig into mindset and I just talk about it. One of my phrases that I like to use a lot is just to go a 110% HAM. Basically, what HAM stands for is just go hard as a mother-you know.

It's just a good mindset to have to approach training or anything else in your life, if you want to be successful with your job, taking care of your family, and just being the best person you can be. It's just kind of the mindset that I've adapted, I just express to the people that I connect with. I think when you have your mindset set correctly, everything else will play out a lot better, versus not having confidence in yourself or not being a go-getter, so to speak. You've just got to kind of let loose and just go after it. That's probably the last thing I'd want to mention. Just have your mindset locked in and just go for it.

Logan: Yeah, I completely agree with you on that. If you don't have the right attitude then well you're not going to do the work to achieve any sort of results you might wish you get. If you just wish for something without putting that action behind it, which come from having the right attitude to do it, that's what brings those results. I've seen that 100% or 110% HAM thing but I didn't know what it stood for. Now it makes a lot of sense.

Travis: Yeah, now you know.

Logan: All right. Excellent. Well, thank you very much for joining this, Travis. It was an enlightening call. We covered some good information and even I picked up a couple of things there that I can put into action right away.

Travis: Awesome, man. Again, I appreciate it. I love doing this stuff and hopefully some of the things I mentioned helps some people out.

Logan: Yeah, I have some links down on [Legendary Strength where I posted the podcast](#) here so you can go and check out all of Travis' stuff. I'm sure we'll be trading some guest articles and whatnot and you'll be hearing more from Travis in the future. Be sure to go check out his website right now.