

Top Tips from the Trainer of Superheroes – Magnus Lygdbäck – #929

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. I should mention, we're recording this in person at the Beverly Hilton, which is the most storied hotel in Hollywood where the Golden Globes happen and things like that, so we're in the middle of Hollywood. This is where the Biohacking Conference is every year, so it's my favorite place. Thanks for coming in.

Magnus Lygdbäck:

I'm so excited to be here.

Dave:

Today's guest is a well-known trainer from Sweden who has probably the hardest to pronounce name of any guest who's ever been on the show. Magnus Lygdbäck. Did I say I right?

Magnus:

You said it perfectly.

Dave:

All right. I studied actually, guys, for eight hours with my Swedish wife in order to learn how to say that properly, so.

Magnus:

Well, you did well.

Dave:

So does that mean I get bonus personal trainer points or something?

Magnus:

Sure.

Dave:

A typical short, Swedish response. I appreciate that.

Magnus:

Well, no, it would be interesting to do a session or two with you.

Dave:

It would be. You'd probably kick my ass. So you're famous because, I mean, you've got a YouTube channel and you've trained Ben Affleck, Katy Perry, all kinds of crazy Hollywood celebrities, and you have the Magnus Method. So I wanted to go deep with you about how you got to be there and what you do to make these people who are really high performers like musicians, artists, actors, have the worst life ever in terms of travel and late nights and bad food. And so you're overcoming all that with training

because they have to look superhuman. I wonder how you do it because I'm kind of lazy, and I just want to learn from someone who already did the work.

Dave:

What makes you qualified to even go, "Hey Katy, I'd like to show you how to have abs," or whatever she wanted.

Magnus:

Well it all started me, me doing a lot of sports growing up back home in Sweden, I've been doing this for 21 years plus now. And I started working with all these athletes after my career was over as a hockey player, and I got certified as a trainer, and I started seeing all these athletes. And when you train with a hockey player or a soccer player, you look at them very sports specifically, what do you need? And then I started getting all these actors, and musicians, pop artists... And then I started getting all these actors, and musicians, pop artists. One day a guy walked into the gym and he was Max Martin, he's the most successful songwriter and producer in history.

Magnus:

So I started working with him and he started taking me on his trips and I got an insight in the life of an artist. We would travel the world and he would record all these pop artists, and I started working with them. And I realized that no one was looking at these artists like there were athletes.

Dave:

They are though, right?

Magnus:

100%. It was called being a celebrity trainer, a name that, it's attached to mine now and I don't love it, but it is what it is. It's not who you train, it's how you train. So I started breaking down, what do they need? If you got Britney Spears and she's doing a 90-minute show in three-and-a-half minute intervals, how should she work out in the gym? So I started adapting the training to the goal and to the client and just by looking at them like they were athletes, their sport was singing and performing. Then I started traveling with them and I realized that, "Oh my Lord, I'm seeing someone an hour in the gym." But here we are going from time zone to time zone, hotel room to radio promo, TV, soundcheck, show, airplane, and on and on, I didn't have the tools.

Dave:

You know what that reminds me of, so Nikki Bella was on the show, celebrity and also professional wrestler, and she described exactly that life, but it was very similar to what you'd hear even from Third Eye Blind. I've worked with those guys, been backstage with them. They get beat to death by the road plus all the breathing that they're doing. And I never paid much attention to that until Stephan Jenkins just said, "Now here's all my breathing that's planned out ahead for a show." And I was blown away because it's a different kind of endurance athletics with minimal recovery, almost like doing an endurance event every day and just traveling around doing that, so you've ground down. But I wanted to ask you, so I mean, you're right you've got these nice big guns and everything and you're training these people to look really good, but everything I know about training says that recovery is as important as training. And these guys are minimizing recovery, how do you get around that?

Magnus:

Well, when you film a movie, it's really hard because then you have 14-hour days when it's all in, it's all physical, and then you have a short turnaround, that is a challenge let me tell you, so you do whatever you can. But same thing with an artist when you're on tour, it's all about finding those spots, when should I be eating, can we get a break here to do some... Get an hour at the spa with some ice bath and a sauna.

Dave:

So you recommend that to your clients as well as the exercise?

Magnus:

I do. And for me, it's about creating good habits as well. When you're on tour, your schedule is created for you to take you from city to city, to do radio promo and to do shows, there's nothing in there that is about you and your wellness.

Dave:

None at all.

Magnus:

Nothing at all, nothing to really look, what do you need? So if Katy Perry's got a show for 20,000 people at 8:00 PM, I look at when should she be waking up? What type of workout should she be doing during the day to optimize the performance at night? What is she doing three hours before a show, one hour before the show, or even 20 minutes. So traditionally, it's all been warming up the voice, doing a sound check, sitting in the locker room, but I'm big about looking at the details, what do I do to optimize myself to perform? So when I get on stage, how do I know that I've done everything I can physically and mentally to be at my best, and what do you do after when you get off the stage?

Dave:

I think you're supposed to go out for drinks and make out with fans, at least that's what I've mostly seen from the rock stars I've hung with.

Magnus:

Well, we'll do that for three weeks straight-

Dave:

I know right.

Magnus:

... We'll see how you've wrecked. When I got thrown into that world, I realized, I need more tools. So that's when I got into the lifestyle coaching, nutrition, and really started working on how I can help someone with structure and optimizing in with good habits, out with bad habits, the training's just a little part of it.

Dave:

I love that you're saying that. I went through this period when I weighed 300 pounds when I was younger, and I think it's all about the training. So I said, "I'm going to go on a low fat, low calorie diet, I'll work out an hour and a half a day, six days a week, half weights, half cardio, and I'm going to do it no matter what." And 18 months later, I was still the same weight. I was stronger, but I was still fat. And it drove me nuts, but I had-

Magnus:

That cardio, 200 calories burnt on the treadmill that 30 minutes and they will not... That cinnamon roll that is 850 calories-

Dave:

They don't match. You can't pay for pizza on the treadmill.

Magnus:

No, comes down to nutrition when it's about weight loss.

Dave:

Ah, I love hearing a celebrity trainer say that because if someone had just told me that when I was 16, I would've just focused on my food instead of just beating myself up in the gym. So how do you know or how would someone listening know, "Okay, I want change my diet, but I still should train some amount." So for a mere mortal, who maybe doesn't have to look like Gal Gadot, don't have to be Wonder Woman something, what's a normal training frequency?

Magnus:

Well, let me start by addressing training and nutrition. I always get the question. How much training, how much is nutrition? Is it 50-50, 60-40? Just know that you shouldn't even talk about nutrition and training in the same sentence, you need to get on top of your nutrition and on top of your training both in a balanced way.

So what I would recommend to someone who wants to start that journey is to not be too hard on themselves. Because we tend to go from zero to 100, or going to extreme, and then you're good for a week and then you fall off the wagon and you set yourself up for failure. So a system that I use a lot is my 17 out of 20 method, which is bulletproof, you cannot fail, you never fail, you don't need to feel like a failure ever. So if you eat 20 meals, I want 17 out of 20 to be on point, three out of 20 enjoy life.

Dave:

Even just eating garbage or just a little bit.

Magnus:

Yes.

Dave:

See, I have a hard time with that. I used to do that, cheat days, kind of a similar thing.

Magnus:

Treat days.

Dave:

Yeah, or treat days. And I'll still do that, but on a treat day, fine, I'll have some extra sugar that day, but I'm not going to eat the Twinkies, I'm not going to eat hydrogenated fat, and I'm not going to eat gluten because I know I'm going to have cravings for three days afterwards and it's going to lower my energy. So how do I feel okay the next day after cheat day.

Magnus:

I'm like you, but most people aren't, so.

Dave:

Okay, fair point.

Magnus:

What I've realized after 20 years plus is that you need to come up with a system where people don't feel like they're failing as soon as they make a mistake. So if people really want that Twinkie, they can have it. It's not going to be the greatest thing, sugar's terrible for you, it messes with me for days. But at least there's a plan, a plan of after that Twinkie, that I know that, "Oh, I need to get back to my 17 clean meals."

Dave:

So it's not about perfection because perfectionism kills everything. And a lot of people "So I failed on the diet, therefore, it's just all Twinkies."

Magnus:

Correct.

Dave:

And you've gotten rid of that with the Magnus Method.

Magnus:

So if you're too extreme one Twinkie and it's over, "Oh I failed." Same thing with training, if I'm supposed to be training really hard, six days a week and I don't have it in me and I do five, "I failed." So I think that you should start, first of all, look at training holistic. I'm involved in all these extreme makeovers, I build these superheroes for the big screen, but I preach balance, and I think that you should look at training from a much more holistic perspective. Look at three things, one, what do I like to do? No. 2, what does my body need? No. 3, what do I want to master or get better at? Many times, those three things are different things that might be the same, that should create your weekly programming.

So for me, strength training's my No. 1, meditation, yoga is my No. 2, I need it. My three is Brazilian ju-jitsu. I don't enjoy it every time, I have to admit, I'm getting my butt kicked, but I love the art form and I love to get better at it. So the beautiful thing about that, once you have those three figured out, you can actually make all those benefit each other. So I can do yoga poses that benefits my Brazilian ju-jitsu, human strength training, that benefits that. So I think that's the way you should approach it.

Dave:

Okay. So you look to get benefits across multiple goals by just picking this up, so it's high return on investment from the minute you spend exercising. It's funny, so I don't have the schedule of a rockstar where it's every night, but I've been through weeks where I'm doing four main stage presentations in different cities actually quite often. I would never wake up and do a heavy lift. I want to bring the energy to the audience, I'm not going to waste it on plates or something, but I'm going to go for a walk, and do some stretches, or meditation, or something so I've got blood flowing, but I'm not actually already burning out what I'm planning to share with the audience.

Magnus:

Smart, smart.

Dave:

Is that kind of a similar recommendation to what you're doing?

Magnus:

Correct. That session might have been, if you and I would work together, we would probably do that the day before, and then on the day of, we would do something that helps you to take up the oxygen, like a couple of high intensity intervals.

Dave:

Okay. A couple of sprints.

Magnus:

Couple of sprints, stretching, opening up, optimizing air flow in the lungs.

Dave:

Okay. Do you do specific breathing exercises with your clients?

Magnus:

What I do is I work with a lot of isometric exercises to open up your lungs and to align your spine. You see your spine is a postural muscle, it's always activated, you don't choose to activate it, so you need to work it in a different way. To reprogram it, you need to work isometric more than six seconds, so I do isometric work on the spine to reprogram you so you have a better posture and a better airflow.

Dave:

So when they walk on stage their posture is perfect. And isometric, some people listening may not be into training, so that's when you're pushing against a force that doesn't move. So basically standing against the wall and pushing as hard as you can, knowing it's not going to move.

Magnus:

Correct.

Dave:

And so you have people that lean back and push their head back against the floor kind of things.

Magnus:

That's one of my favorites. And I think that when me or my clients are traveling, when you're traveling a lot, you can do that when you're sitting in your seat on a flight as well, just push back your spine, flatten out your neck. So that's a good one that I recommend just to reprogram your spine because we're born this way and we die this way, so we constantly got to remind ourself to be up here.

Dave:

Okay. What kind of gear do celebrities travel with? Do they have resistance bands, do they have magnets? I have no idea.

Magnus:

It depends. So we could do workout in here, I'll always find something. I do-

Dave:

Lamp curls.

Magnus:

Lamp curls, we could do pull ups underneath the table, we can do planks, we can use the cushion to stir the pot. I have training bands that I like to send with people. So I have two different kits, mini bands and super rubber bands that I use a lot.

Dave:

I find those are really convenient for travel because they don't weigh very much.

Magnus:

Correct.

Dave:

How about blood flow restriction, you ever mess around with that?

Magnus:

I have.

Dave:

What do you think?

Magnus:

I tore my bicep a couple year ago, and in my rehab I did that.

Dave:

Okay. And I did an episode a while ago on that with the guys from Be Strong. And it's really interesting, I mean, you put these bands on that restrict, but don't fully restrict blood flow and you don't have to have much weight, and you just grow muscle, it's kind of ridiculous.

Magnus:

Yeah. So I'm not an expert when it comes to the science, how backed up by science, if it works or not, but a lot of people are swearing by it and it looks like it's really beneficial, and that's good enough for me.

Dave:

I may or may not have done that yesterday. I was doing a bunch of filming and also, in the morning, I brought my bands and I pumped them up. For about two days afterwards, there's an inch more blood flow, so at least you're getting a pump. But the science that I've seen shows something called [inaudible 00:17:44] alpha, it actually is growing more blood flow and by changing lactic acid levels, so it is growing more muscles, so.

Dave:

Okay. Have you heard of this 70 hard program that's out there?

Magnus:

No.

Dave:

Oh man. They're telling you for just 70 days, it's like an hour and a half of exercise and drink a gallon of water, or meditate for this, and read this. And I look at that, I'm like, "That is a recipe for overtraining if I've ever seen one." So it's you're seven days a week, you have to do this stuff-

Magnus:

Seven days a week.

Dave:

Yeah. Just for 70 days straight, and it'll change your life. I'm like, it'll change your life by either blowing out your adrenals or giving you an injury and a joint or a muscle, but there's people who are kind of swearing by it. And I like to talk to a professional trainer about the pros and cons. of like, "I'm just going to go in there instead of 17 out 20," which is what you teach. "It's like just 70 days of doing it right, after that I can just go eat pizzas again." Pros and cons of that approach?

Magnus:

Well, first of all, they're not giving you any tools to succeed after. That's a problem I have with a lot of these extreme diets and workout plans, they give you absolutely no tools. So the second it's over, what do I do now? So that's one issue, but yeah, to work at seven, we know that you'll get overtrained after seven days a week, 70 days. I don't do that with my superheroes that I built, I would never. I spend one hour, five days a week, maybe six during the buildup.

Dave:

That's still pretty heavy. I mean, these guys sleeping a ton, they're probably taking testosterone if they need to, they're probably eating tons of protein, probably taking extra amino acids. What do you do nutritionally when someone's just pounded out five days a week for an hour? that would it blow me out?

Magnus:

Well, what I do is we don't work the same muscles every day. So I target different muscles every day, and then we allow that muscle group to rest and recover while working on the next one, supplement-wise, multivitamins, B12, I'm a big fan of L-theanine because we know that it can help with lowering the stress hormone, the cortisol, so.

Dave:

The stuff in green tea, do you just take it before bed or take it in the morning.

Magnus:

Both.

Dave:

Both, okay. So it's good with [crosstalk 00:21:05]-

Magnus:

The more, the better if you're building it superhero. I do it both morning and at night.

Dave:

You need a lot of aminos when you're trying to build a muscle like that.

Magnus:

Well, yeah, protein or BCAs, branched-chain amino acids, which, if you eat a lot of food, you might not have to do that, but I think it's very convenient to have branched-chain amino acids or some protein powder with you.

Dave:

Okay. Plant-based protein powder versus whey or animal-based protein powders, [crosstalk 00:21:43]-

Magnus:

Well, the most bioavailable one as we know whey, egg is high, vegan not as much. But I do think it's interesting now when we're starting to get to a point when... A vegan protein powder, first of all, you need all the essential amino acid to hold, you want it to be full protein so you need to mix vegan protein sources, but we know the quality is not as high. So I do think it's interesting now when we start to play with added BCAs in vegan protein powders. And as a matter of fact, I'm working on that myself right now.

Dave:

On being a vegan?

Magnus:

Vegan protein powder with added BCAs.

Dave:

Okay. But I mean, are you fully vegan now?

Magnus:

I'm not vegan. I'm not vegan.

Magnus:

Yeah, I've been challenged a few times to try it for a week, but I'm not really that interested.

Dave:

I've had a lot of conversations with vegans over their first steak in 20 years. And I'm always honored when that happens. And the look on their face afterwards like, "I didn't remember how it felt to feel this way." So there's something that happens there.

So I don't want to go on an anti-vegan kick, because like I said, I was a vegan for a long time and I get the ethos, but I also want to know if I'm working out five days a week and I'm having one of the gazillion plant-based protein powders that says in big letters plant based and there's like four animal-based protein powders on the bottom shelf that are more expensive, I'm like I would buy those because I actually get a higher return per minute of exercise. And so I want people listening to just hear and understand that. And that's not opinion, it's results based.

Magnus:

It's facts.

Dave:

And you're seeing that. Casein versus whey protein.

Magnus:

Well, whey, casein is more of a slow release, so it's popular to take at night. I recommend whey over casein.

Dave:

I would do the same, casein appears to raise cancer risk, especially in the presence of other compounds like aflatoxin, which is actually pretty common in food, just trace amounts, but it amplifies how bad it is. Whey raises glutathione but a lot of whey also raises insulin, which is great. If you're trying to put on muscle, insulin like growth factor, it's because insulin is a growth factor. So raise insulin so you could lift heavy, have some whey before, have some whey after with sugar, which we're not recommending, and you're going to put muscle on because of insulin, but you might pay for it later. Do you look at longevity? I'm an anti-aging guy really.

Magnus:

Yes. That's 100%. And there's the balance there as well. So when I look at myself and what I eat and what I do, I do look at longevity and health, but I also look at what makes me happy.

Dave:

Well said, because that makes you young.

Magnus:

Because I think happiness probably makes life longer as well. And the quality of life should mean something as well. So if someone told me that you can't have your burrata and your rib eye on a Saturday night with your glass of red, it's going to take a year off your life, I might be okay with that.

Dave:

Yes, until that last year.

Magnus:

Yeah. Well, hopefully I've had a lot of good years until [crosstalk 00:26:07]-

Dave:

I would trade a year of life for many years of rib eyes because they're, they're important.

Magnus:

Yeah. And I don't think that they will shorten your life.

Dave:

Intermittent fasting, yay or nay?

Magnus:

I think it's a strategy that works for a lot of people. I think any diet is a strategy.

Dave:

Okay.

Magnus:

I've seen also, here in Hollywood, how we... A lot of people now have a name for a poor diet, that's what worries me, but there's a right way of doing it and the wrong way of doing it. So yeah, someone who didn't eat anything at all, no breakfast and a little crappy salad for lunch, now I have a name for it. Whatever strategy or diet you're on, you need to do research and make sure you do it right so it benefits you.

Dave:

Okay. Now we talked about intermittent fasting and then you said something really interesting, you said have a little crappy salad for lunch, but isn't salad good for you.

Magnus:

Yes, but not if it's filled with croutons and don't have that chicken that you need.

Dave:

Yeah. And it's got bad oils in the dressing, and MSG, and all that.

Magnus:

Exactly. It doesn't have to be the salad. What I mean is that people that didn't need enough nutrients before, now have a name for a diet. It's not fasting only, it can be any type of diet that there's... How can I put it? Well, that's what I've seen, to go back to the fasting, I've seen a lot of, many times females, that are not eating enough-

Magnus:

... And who now have a name for the diet and they can hide behind that and justify it. And then they have misunderstood fasting.

Dave:

Okay, there's anorexia that's hidden or orthorexia, which are real things for men and women. There's something that happens with women who aren't anorexic, whether they're intermittent fasting or not, they just don't eat enough calories. They don't have enough energy because they didn't bring enough energy into their body. How do you teach them to eat enough?

Magnus:

Sometimes that's a challenge. The good thing now, after doing a couple of very public makeovers with females, the proof is in the pudding, they know who I've been working with, they can see the proof, so when I say something, they will listen, so it's easier. The older you get and the more experienced and-

Dave:

You're the voice of wisdom, say "All right, fine. I'll eat some more." And then they do it.

Magnus:

Yes and no. To change your behavior, it's not that easy. If you're not used to eating a lot of food or eating a certain type of food, it's nothing that you change overnight.

Dave:

So we're both relatively muscular guys, I'm probably a little taller than you, but do you ever sit down at a restaurant and just order two meals?

Magnus:

Yes. One thing that I teach a lot of my clients is to order an extra starter, a protein-based starter because also restaurants are being... The protein's the most expensive thing on the plate.

Dave:

Except asparagus.

Magnus:

Maybe asparagus then. So yeah, I like that. Two mains is a good option, but even better many times its order a protein-based starter.

Dave:

Okay. What's your favorite protein-based starter at a restaurant?

Magnus:

Well, anything from a grilled octopus to a carpaccio beef tartare.

Dave:

So I like to stress test things by saying, what do extremists do? So what does an astronaut do to recover? Because they need the most recovery, Or what does an actual superhero on the screen do in order to look like a superhero, which is why you're an interesting personality on the show, because you're saying the hardest case here where you have to be super lean and super ripped, which kind of go... They oppose each other in nature, do you use keto as a part of that?

Magnus:

I've done once when I worked with Alicia Vikander on Tomb Raider, and during the final weeks of our cutting cycle, she had to travel to the jungle somewhere in South America. So then I thought this is going to be super simple if I send some MCT oil with her, she can get fresh fish, it was easy for me to control the diet, so. Not pure keto that many times, it really depends on who I'm working with. I do feel like people are responding to different diets as well. And I'm trying to stay very humble when it comes to pushing my diets on other people. When I do these superhero movies, I want to start somewhere, and then I monitor, and then I make adjustments.

Dave:

Right. I love that you said there isn't one diet for anyone. And I've written a book about how to kind of dip in and out of ketosis, but the only thing in there that I'll tell you works for everyone is don't eat foods that cause inflammation. That works for everyone, but they say, "What is the list?" And so it's kind of frustrating because people always want the one thing that works.

Magnus:

Well, I find it fascinating that you say when we talk about food that causes inflammation, that can be different. And I think that's why you have people on the other side that are saying that no food can ever cause inflammation because we can't prove it. But we do know that, yeah, we're all different. And it might cause inflammation for me, but not for you and-

Dave:

So I'd like to cook a meal for one of those people, because I know how to cause every kind of inflammation. I'd cook a meal that had them feeling hungover the next day and I'd say, "Don't worry, the food didn't do it, it's just because you're weak." So you can stack a lot of inflammogens in one meal, you have some deep-fried soybean oil, lots of sugar, some gluten, some casein, some artificial sweeteners, and a bunch of plants that aren't really food that we can eat when we're not starving.

Magnus:

I'll stick to my steak.

Dave:

Yeah. I'm with you there. All right, let's talk about steak, grass-fed or industrial processed.

Magnus:

I order grass-fed. So what I do is I order my meat in boxes that come comes on dry ice where I know that I'm getting... I want to know where I'm getting my meat from.

Dave:

I did the same thing while I lived in the US, now I just raise the animals myself. We have three cows, and 25 sheep, and 25 pigs. And I feed the pigs of special diet otherwise pork fat is kind of in the middle of the... It's relative high in omega sixes because they feed them corn, so mine don't eat that, so.

When I'm home, I know what I'm eating. When I'm on the road though, I look for restaurants, my assistant, it drives her nuts, and she helps me find places that have grass-fed meat. And I say, grass-fed, grass-finished and if so then that's the restaurant, I'll go there or five nights in a row.

Magnus:

And thank you, grass-fed, grass-finished, that's a big one. So being European, my platform's very mixed, I have a lot of Europeans following me and they are confused when I keep talking about grass-fed, because where I'm from, everything's grass-fed.

Dave:

It takes about six weeks of grain feeding to make a cow diabetic. I wonder what happens if we go on a crappy diet for six weeks, does that do the same thing to us? What's your take, does it?

Magnus:

Here's an interesting job that I did. I worked with Mark Ruffalo on a TV show called I Know This Much Is True. He's playing twins. I was hired to make sure that one twin was 40 pounds heavier than the other.

Magnus:

So first of all, what I convinced him to do is to let's take him down 20 pounds below his normal for twin No. 1 and then gain the 40, so it's just an additional 20. But what we did, I was manipulating insulin and sugar. The first thing in the morning, last thing at night, ice cream whipped cream, banana, a lot of fast carb sugar at the wrong time. And yeah, I know his inflammations came back, and he felt crappy. And we tried to do it as healthy as possible, but that was an interesting six weeks when we did that.

Dave:

Wow. So you actually used circadian time timing as part of breaking a system as well as building it. So you don't have clients eat after the sun goes down kind of a thing.

Magnus:

Yeah. Unless you've been performing at 9:00 PM and you haven't had anything to eat, then it's different. But yes, I do that, yes. So basically you do the opposite to mess.

Dave:

So I have sugar in the middle of the night and the first thing in the morning and you're going to just really quickly put on 20 pounds.

Magnus:

Yes. 40 pounds.

Dave:

I'm amazed. I think it was Tom Hanks [inaudible 00:37:51], he had one role where he had to be like, gaunt. And wow, the fortitude to be able to get that lean just for a role and then another role where he had to be 40 pounds overweight. And I remember the interview with him just saying, "God, I never felt so bad in my life." But I mean, the fact that he can pull off that swing.

Or I've had a chance to talk with Gerard Butler and I mean the amount of muscle that he'll put on in a few weeks for these roles, I mean, he's the guy from 300 and just completely cut.

Magnus:

Well, I think it's important to know that you can't put on huge amounts of muscle mass unless you start from scratch, I wouldn't be able to. You hear this constantly that, "Oh, no one can gain that much." I mean, I did a challenge with a female YouTuber a couple of months ago who gained six pounds in 30 days by me just helping her remotely. The DEXA scan said it was all muscle, it might have been other stuff too, yeah, who cares? She looked great, she got stronger, but here's the thing, if it takes someone, let's say someone who's been running 10K four times a week, who's never hit the gym eating poorly.

Dave:

They're going to put muscle on like no one's business.

Magnus:

Right, just by changing their diet, they're going to put on muscles. So that's when you can do this extreme transformations. And if they start from anything else than scratch, it won't be that radical or extreme, it just won't. I have many people I work with when we didn't-

Dave:

Can't you cheat a little bit? This is going back about four or five years when SARMS first kind of came on the market, I put on 29 pounds of muscle in six weeks without changing my exercise or diet.

Magnus:

What?

Dave:

I remember really well, because I packed a shirt that I would wear on stage and I get there and I put on the shirt and the buttons are popping, I can't wear the thing. I had to go buy a shirt from a local store.

Magnus:

What did you take.

Dave:

I took four different SARMs, so selective androgen receptor modulators like LGD-4033, GW-501516, which increases mitochondrial biogenesis.

Magnus:

You and I need to talk, what's [crosstalk 00:40:25].

Dave:

I have a post about this, but basically you take testosterone, testosterone works and I've been on testosterone since I was 26, full disclosure. I used to have less testosterone than my mom in my mid-20s because I was obese and I had all sorts of metabolic dysfunction, and estrogen, and toxic mold exposure, so my system was just wrecked.

And I keep my levels at about 700, which is where they ought to be for a guy my age or guy who's younger, so not super high, they're body builders who are at 2000, but testosterone turns into estrogen through this process of aromatization, which you're familiar with, the fatter you are, the faster you are. Aromatizing, there genetics involved, and I tend to over-aromatize anyway. So I block that with some herbal stuff and also I don't make too much estrogen and I can excrete it more quickly with another thing that helps your second detox pathway.

So I do all that, but these SARMs, they activate the androgen receptors that testosterone was, but testosterone might have a two to one anabolic to estrogenic ratio, these things are like 200 to one. So they just turn on the testosterone without turning on the estrogen. And I mean, it was so ridiculous, I actually ended up hurting my shoulder because you can't grow cartilage and tendons as fast you can grow muscle. So I'm stupidly strong like... you hear the spraining sound and then you get to do shoulder rehab.

And I'm not recommending this to anyone, in fact, it was probably not good for me, but I was just like, "Okay." And I did my post about SARMs, I'm the guinea pig. But I've often thought between some of the stuff we're doing at Upgrade Labs, it puts muscle on about three times faster than just lifting iron, things like isometrics, but with a moving force, and some other technologies, and a new book I'm working on, like blood flow restriction for example, or the bands that you sell. All these are better than what we did before so it's like, there's all these things, when you combine those with the right chemicals and stuff happens where it could be-

Magnus:

Can you get those prescribed?

Dave:

A few doctors will prescribe them, but most of the time they're considered research chemicals, but they're rampant in the body building community but also the anti-aging community. Because my favorite one, GW-501516, also known as cardarine, It's not really an androgen receptor modulator, but they always call it one. It causes you to grow more mitochondria, a lot more. And mitochondria as you know, they're power plants in the cells, but they're also protein manufacturing and serotonin manufacturing, and they're actually factories. So when all of a sudden, your body puts these on more so

than you get from cold water exposure, whatever else, like "Okay, I got my like manufacturing plants, but what's surprised me is that I didn't modify my food." I already eat a good amount of protein, and fat, and all that kind of stuff, high quality and not too many carbs, but some carbs. And just the change, I had to buy new clothes in six weeks.

Magnus:

Did you have any side effects?

Dave:

One of the four that I took, and they're in my blog post on it, I think it was LGD-5066, one of them has a mild testosterone suppression so you do a post-cycle therapy. In Hollywood, that gets rampant, people need to get ripped for a role, like "Fine, I'm going to take testosterone for a little while, not a problem." In fact, it's, I think, very common. But I'm fascinated, how do you get that vision to look at someone and be like, "You know what? They need a little bit more lats and-"

Magnus:

It's a lot of monitoring. Well, first of all, when you do a big movie, you sit down from the get-go with possibly, the director, but definitely with the actor and you talk about the character because you're building a character, who is this person? What's his background? What skillset do they have? Are they angry? Are they animalistic? And then you try to shape and mold that. And that's a big part of it.

Dave:

That's really cool. I never thought of it like that. So you're kind of like a sculptor.

Magnus:

Yeah. It is a part of it. And I think now, if you look at The Northman, my latest project with Alexander Skarsgård, I did Tarzan with him as well. And you can see if you compare the two body types that now, we wanted someone who his spirit animal is a wolf-bear and he's angry, he never felt love, he's a Viking that destroys everything in his way, in his path. And you can see that the way he is hulking forward and moving. We worked hard on building that into the character.

Dave:

That is a really cool project, I love knowing that you did that. I want to know, what was the most challenging of all the makeovers and all the training things you had to do? The one that you're like, "How am I going to do this?"

Magnus:

Well, there's been a few. I think the Mark Ruffalo makeover was extremely challenging because I had never done that before and you don't know if you're going to hit the mark, that's how it is every time, you can only do what you can do and then that's it. I think any project, I would like to go back to any project, the most challenging thing is once you hit the mark first day of filming, you built someone up, they have a lot of muscle mass, low body fat. Now we're going to film for six months, you're going to run around like a maniac 12 hours a day on a movie set, how do we stay in that shape? And that's the hardest part, because I'm with someone on set and I overlook everything they do and try to get a feeling

for how do they feel? How are they overall? What's their energy level? Do I need to up the calories a little bit? Do I need to lower them? So yeah, that's the hardest part on every single project, to maintain.

Dave:

It's the maintenance. So you can get them there, but keeping them there over the course of-

Magnus:

Six months.

Dave:

Yeah, it's crazy. I never understood until... Actually, it was Brandon Routh though explained it to me, he played Superman in 2006. And I just had no idea, and I think most listeners, unless you've really thought about it, the behind the scenes pressure including really low quality food as you've seen on the set, as well as just those crazy hours and nighttime shoots and really bad lighting, some of these guys are putting the glasses on between sets just to let their brains relax and then they try to sleep after that. And I want to go there on sleep, because I think they're some of the worst sleepers because of all this to disruption.

And you interviewed our mutual friend, Michael Breus recently, and I want to introduce all my listeners to your video on sleep, which is what's on your YouTube channel.

Magnus:

It is, yes.

Dave:

And what's your YouTube channel first?

Magnus:

Magnus Method.

Dave:

Okay. So just Magnus Method on YouTube and magnusmethodapp.com is where people get the app.

Magnus:

That's my training app with all my superhero programs and the nutrition plans as well.

Dave:

Good deal, so there's a huge wealth of knowledge there. So what do you know about sleep?

Magnus:

Well, first of all, I find that lot of my clients that don't sleep enough are really stressed about it. So I think you need to allow yourself to set yourself up for success by turning off cell phones, removing them an hour or two hours before bedtime if you can, making sure not to drink coffee after 5:00 for me, it's individual I feel like.

Dave:

After 5:00, you're Swedish though, you guys just drink coffee. In fact, they're the highest coffee drinking [crosstalk 00:48:37] in the world.

Magnus:

That is right my friend, 10 cups a day. But I also did a DNA test when it said will most likely consume a lot of caffeine.

Dave:

Because you're a fast metabolizer.

Magnus:

Yeah. So coffee or caffeine, not too late, making sure not to eat sugar or fast carbs at night and maybe not do a high-paced workout too close to bedtime.

Dave:

Well, you talk about, at least in your video that I saw, between three and 20 minute segment before bed, specific things to do, and which is definitely like don't drink coffee too late. So what goes in those three to 20 minute segments?

Magnus:

Well, what I do is I turn down the lights, make sure to move my phone. I don't have the luxury right now to turn off my cell two hours before bedtime. I make sure to prepare my cold brew for the morning. I have my routines that I do.

Dave:

Okay. It's mostly like a slowing down and the dimming of the lights.

Magnus:

Dimming of the lights, for sure, slowing down, removing too much lights and electronics.

Dave:

After a lot of reading. And just a lot of experimenting, I am fully convinced that when it comes to improving sleep, light is a more important thing to set your circadian timing through the SCN than food. So it's like light, food, temperature in order. So even if you dim the lights, you eat a bunch of ice cream before bed, you did it wrong. But if you say I'm going to leave the lights on and eat ice cream, it's even worse. But if you skip the ice cream and you dim the lights, wow, even if you exercise a little bit, you're going to be okay. And so the relative strength of those seems to be light, food, exercise. But it's so hard, I talked to Steve Aoki when I interviewed him for his book right before the pandemic. And he's like doing sets till 2:00 in the morning with like blinky strobe lights with blue spectrum.

Magnus:

And even later than that.

Magnus:

I've been working with a lot of DJs, so I've been to Vegas way too many times. And many times they get on stage at 2:00 AM in the morning and they play till 5:00. And it is such a challenge, it messes with your hormones, it messes with everything, it's probably the hardest job on planet earth. And it is really hard, I don't have a good answer for you there. What I do, if I feel like this is a real issue and whatever adjustments I'm trying to make or help them with, I have an expert like Dr. Michael Breus that I send them to. I know what I know, and I'm not afraid of using my network of experts when needed, so.

Dave:

That's so cool.

Magnus:

I'm not an expert on sleep. I can't even hold a conversation with Dr. Michael Bruce for... Why even try when I'm good at what I do and he's the man at what he does, so I think that's important.

Dave:

It is. It's terribly important and I think letting people know that you do that is really valuable, because there's some listeners, "Saying I want to be a coach. I'm going to do it all myself." No, you're not. I don't do everything I do myself. There's all kinds of people who know way more than I do, way more than you do, you just have to know who knows what.

Magnus:

You need to know who to trust.

Dave:

How do you know who to trust?

Magnus:

Well, I'm always trying to take in new things. I'm ambitious at what I do, I'm driven, I try to do my homework. Before I trust anyone with information, they need to pass certain levels of security. So that's a good question, I don't have a straight answer for you, but it takes time.

Dave:

So I've been going through over the last, well, 20 years and just curating, knowing the right experts and getting a chance to talk to them here, that's why I wanted to have you on the show because you build, literally, super human physiques and you do it under really rough conditions. So you go on the list of someone who is highly credible and that's like a Ray Dalio style of how believable is someone. And so I would say you're highly believable in your craft. So I learned a lot just about how you think about it. Thank you.

Magnus:

That means a lot to me. Thank you.

Dave:

You're welcome. And thanks for coming out to the Beverly Hilton to do a live interview now that we can do those again. Thanks brother.

Magnus:

Thank you so much.

Dave:

Guys, go to magnusmethodapp.com, there's a ton of info here. And like I just said, Magnus knows his craft. He spent enough time doing it, and he's done enough times and enough very highly visible roles that he's believable, which is why he's on the show. See you all next time.