

Craig Ballantyne: Hey, everyone. This is Craig Ballantyne. I'm here with my friend [Jason Ferruggia](#), the man behind **Muscle Gaining Secrets** and [The Renegade Gym in New Jersey](#), which is the coolest place to workout in the world. So, Jay, welcome to the call.

Jason Ferruggia: Thanks for having me, Craig.

Craig Ballantyne: Last night I was reading your new book, which is **Triple Threat Muscle**. I have to say it's probably the most unique fitness book that I've ever come across, mostly because you have actually done studies on your own clients.

Everybody has case studies, but you've got where you've actually split them up. I thought that was really cool. So, why don't you maybe just explain a little bit of the background to people about what you actually did, how you were able to do that, and monitor the results?

Jason Ferruggia: No doubt, definitely. Over the last two years I've had systems that I've worked with forever that have worked, but I'm obsessed with training. I'm always trying to come up with something new, something exciting. So, I said, "Let me try a few different things here."

Over the last couple years I had more average guys. I always had a lot of elite level athletes, even though high school guys I trained were strong and they've been with me for awhile. For whatever reason, over the last couple years I had a lot of just normal average Joes, weekend warrior kind of guys. I said, "I haven't worked with this many guys in this population for so long. Let me see what really works best for them."

I had a huge pool of guys to work with and I split them up into different groups and I ran through all kinds of different sets. Full body workouts, upper lower splits, and I experimented with three days and four days, and different sets and rep schemes, volume and frequency. It basically was just two years of experimenting with tons of different variables to see what worked best for the average guy.

We came to some pretty cool conclusions.

Craig Ballantyne: So, one of the things that I thought was pretty interesting was your findings on the four day versus three day split. Whenever I've been trying to do four day splits, even for the meathead stuff it always comes out to like three and a half days, or three and a third days. It's never really useful, it just becomes so much irrelevant stuff to try to get four full days in.

What were some of the things that you found there?

Jason Ferruggia: I agree with you. I like three days of hard strength training for most people, because most people have a life outside of the gym. If they're athletes, obviously they're busy with their sport. Weekend warriors have things going on, or people just have hobbies like surfing or snowboarding, or people just have a full time job and a family.

So, three hard days is really the most I find most people can recover from. There's also the mental factor too, where I find if I have a guy come to the gym three days they're really excited

about it, the fourth day they're just kind of like, "Oh, we're here again." I like people to be excited coming to the gym.

Myself, I'm like that too. I don't want to go, "Oh, I got to do another workout." The fourth day just some people do want that fourth day, but I find if I make that fourth day just an easy day, like bis, tris, and abs or something that's the most people can handle. Four big workouts is a lot to handle.

You've got to remember that recovery isn't just physical, it's mental, emotional, stress weighs heavily on that. So, I do like three days and I encourage everyone to have a life outside of the gym and play sports and be active. With three days you can do the things you want to do. You can do martial arts, you can play flag football, you can surf, you can run hill sprints, whatever you want to do.

Craig Ballantyne: Perfect. The other cool thing that I thought you touched on a little bit is the way you have your sets and reps set up in that specific program, in the Triple Threat program.

I noticed something the other day, I've noticed a few times, but going in I was doing five sets of five on something and the first two sets were kind of still in the warm up phase, even though I did pretty good warm up, then the third set, boom, everything just started to drive up so well.

I think that the way you set your sets and reps up in that program it kind of same mentality or takes that same approach.

Jason Ferruggia: Yes.

Craig Ballantyne: It maximizes that benefit is what I really should be saying.

Jason Ferruggia: Absolutely. You're really not ready on your first set to give it everything you've got, your CNS isn't really prepared, and just your joints and your whole body is not really prepared. I like to do a lot of warm ups, more warm ups than normal, keeping the reps low.

The way we set the reps up in the program itself with the work sets definitely leads to your heaviest set being more effective than if you did it in the traditional way.

Craig Ballantyne: Yes. Why don't you maybe explain how you would do your general body warm up and then maybe just when do you get into that major heavy set?

Jason Ferruggia: Let's say we're doing an incline press and we're going to start with 250. We'll do the general warm up first, which is a lot of calisthenics type stuff and just some dynamic things. We'll start with jumping jacks, flings, mountain climbers, some isometric holds, some glute activation, ab activation, stuff like that. That would be about ten minutes.

I'm a big believer in that kind of warm up really preparing the joints, the muscles, and the tendon ligaments and everything. I used to be not so big into warming up, but I definitely found that long term for if you want to be healthy it's definitely a requirement.

Then when we get into specific warm ups, like I said, incline at 250 is going to be our starting weight for the day, we'll warm up with the bar, 95, 135, and then I like to make some small jumps. Normally, I would have gone 135, 185, right to 225. I prefer to make smaller jumps, 20 pound jumps and really focus on accelerating as fast as possible. That fires up the nervous system, gets you more prepared.

Craig Ballantyne: How many reps do you do on each set? Are you doing three or six?

Jason Ferruggia: Three to five usually. Then we get close to the work set and I'll do a couple singles. Like, if we're going to start on 250 I'll do a couple singles at 225, and a single at 240, then we'll start at 250.

I like the 250 set to be, that's your first work set, but it's not going to be your heaviest set. So, that set is actually like a working warm up set. You're still going hard, but then we're going to increase the weight on the next set, drop the reps a little, and that really prepared you better for your heaviest set.

Craig Ballantyne: So, you've always, not just in this book, but you've always been writing about how people do way too much in their warm up in terms of reps and actually cause fatigue in their warm up. Do you want to maybe just explain to people what they're doing wrong there?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. Like I said, I like to do a lot of warm ups, but I don't want to be breathing heavy during warm ups, I don't want lactic acid accumulation, I don't want you getting too much of a pump during your warm up.

By doing a lot of warm ups properly with low reps you'll fire up your CNS without just burning out, not getting too tired. You don't want to waste a lot of energy, that's why you keep the reps low. You just do a lot of repeats, which will kind of grease the groove, as I like to say, and excite the nervous system.

Instead of doing just ten, eight, six, six, like that, I'll just do ten reps on the first one just to get a little blood flowing and then all the warm ups will be three to five after that with a couple of singles.

Craig Ballantyne: You've already got some of the blood flow going from all the other stuff you've done before, the general warm up?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, the jumping jacks and the whole dynamic warm up.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay, perfect. When I got into the rest of the nutrition part of that book that we were reading, the Triple Threat book that you've got coming out, you mention in there that you actually like the Warrior Diet way of eating, which I actually didn't even know. You never mentioned this before. You held this back from me.

Jason Ferruggia: I do like it. For fat loss I do like it. It's pretty simple. I find that people don't always have a great, as much as you and I know about nutrition, people don't always study it like you and I do.

When I try to explain fat loss diets to people a lot of times they get very confused and they want something simple. If I say, “Eat this, this, and this six times a day,” there’s a lot of confusion. Whereas if I just tell them, “All right. You have one main meal a day.” It’s very simple, there’s not a lot of thinking. What are you going to eat the rest of the day? Just a couple pieces of fruit.

It’s very, very easy. You can’t have a pizza every night on that, but as long as you’re eating well you can kind of feel fulfilled and satisfied with that big meal at night. You kind of get to cheat, you get to eat your fill at night, but obviously, like I said, don’t eat pizza and whatnot. It’s a very easy diet.

You will find that on it you do have a lot of energy, because when you’re eating all day it does take a lot of energy to digest and uses up a lot of enzymes. I know personally when I’m eating to gain size I’m tired all the time from eating so much. But, eating very minimally throughout the day you will find that your mental focus and your energy is great, unlike what people would think.

That’s really the main reason I like it, just because it’s so easy.

Craig Ballantyne: Yes. I don’t want to spend too much time on this, but my friend Brad Pelon, he talks about the fasting stuff. We find that some people if they force themselves to eat breakfast they actually become more tired after they eat breakfast than if they hadn’t forced that breakfast on themselves in the first place. Right?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, absolutely.

Craig Ballantyne: So, when you eat on that schedule are you also having a shake in the morning?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. I have a shake in the morning and then I’ll just have fruit all day. Then at night I would start with vegetables and hummus, a huge salad. I don’t eat meat or anything, but if you do you could obviously have a piece of meat, a big salad, some brown rice, whatever you would want. I just have beans and rice or, like I said, a big salad, vegetables, stuff like that.

Craig Ballantyne: I’ve had dinner at your place when Jen has made it for you. Everybody listening to this call, don’t think that Jason is involved at all in the food preparation here, but he does eat very well at dinner. Jen does an amazing job.

So, switching that up, that’s a fat loss thing. What about people listening to this call that are like, “What do I want to eat if I want to gain muscle?”

Don’t be afraid to throw in your plant based recommendations, because a lot of people on Facebook were asking about how that’s working, does that work, will it work long term? So, just general guidelines. You can’t get into too specific here, but how to do that.

Jason Ferruggia: I think it works, definitely. I’ve had no problem regaining size after my injury with a plant based diet. I found a lot of people doing the same. I had clients make the switch. No one is having any trouble maintaining size or strength or gaining.

It's a little difficult. The only time it becomes difficult is if you have trouble staying lean, because then as they say vegetarians have to kind of go through your carbs to get to their proteins. So, you do have to eat a decent amount of carbs to gain size on a vegan diet. That's the only issue.

If that is an issue for you, you're going to have to add in more conditioning and more cardio, but it can be done. You're going to have to take more protein shakes, which I don't always recommend for people, but it becomes a necessary evil on this kind of diet.

For most people, if you want to eat meat that's entirely your decision, but just understand if through evolution we didn't eat meat six times a day like a typical bodybuilding diet, we ate when we got a kill, which was once every few days. So, you might eat meat six times a month versus six times a day.

If you eat animal products I have no problem with that, but I would kind of lessen it a bit. Cut it down to maybe once or twice a day. Really limit the red meat and the pork consumption, stick more with chicken and fish, organic, and eggs. Just rotate. You want to make sure that you rotate your food sources as often as possible.

If you're trying to gain size, I mean calories are the most important thing. For skinny guys carbs are the most important thing, so just load up on the brown rice, the oats, quinoa, barley, things like that, whole grain breads. Nuts are huge. Any skinny guy just carry nuts everywhere, just load up on nuts all day. They're a ton of calories and easy to eat.

Craig Ballantyne: Awesome. Why don't we now turn back to your gym? It's just so cool. Everyone who is listening to this call, even if you live half way around the world, they can get a great idea just by going to the TheRenegadeGym.com and checking out the video there. Then also, you've got some awesome YouTube videos.

It's just this cool little place tucked away in Jersey. Why don't you tell us about some of the crazy stuff that you guys do in the gym, and also just how you set up your training program? It's not a gym where you can just go in anytime you want, you've got to go in there in the groups.

I've watched those groups train and I'm ready to move to Jersey right now, just because it's so awesome to be there.

Jason Ferruggia: Thanks for saying that. I appreciate that. We do mainly group training. We just try to make it fun. We stick with the basics, obviously.

It's my belief that everyone should learn something, so I'm not just there entertaining people. There's going to be the frustrating part of learning things. I do want people to learn how to squat and dead lift, which as you know is complicated and takes time.

We always stick to the basic lifts. Everyone is going to squat lift if they can, if they don't have an injury. Then we make it fun by, first of all, group training is a lot more fun, we compete, we keep track of records, we keep a record board. Anytime something is measured it improves a lot more.

There's the whole comradery, everyone gets to know each other, everyone screams at each other, cheers each other on. That all makes it fun. Then we do a ton of nontraditional stuff, which makes it fun as well. A lot of kegs, and log presses, and we flip tires, and drag sleds, and push the prowler.

I'll have the workouts planned. Like you said, it's not a public gym, we train in groups and we have usually two different groups. One is more of a size and strength kind of group where it's just skinny guys looking to get bigger, stronger, more explosive and powerful.

Then another one, which is more of a fighter kind of a workout, which is more for conditioning and fat loss, and it's good for guys who are a little bit beat up. Maybe they can't squat or dead lift, things like that.

I'll have the workouts printed out and we will also have randomly I'll add a challenge at the end of a day. Not every day, but at least once or twice a week we'll have a challenge. We'll say, "Let's see how many times you can clean and press the log. How long you can hold this position." Or, "How many times can you go back and forth on the monkey bars?"

We always keep it fresh and keep it challenging. Everyone loves that, we scream and fight to the death, we just challenge each other. That makes a great atmosphere. That's basically what we do in a nutshell.

Craig Ballantyne: That's awesome. What kind of exercises can people do at your place that they won't be able to do at a regular gym? Obviously, prowlers, you've got log presses, and you've got the [inaudible.] Talk about that stuff, because that's awesome for people to check out.

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. We have a ton of stuff that you couldn't get at a regular gym. Battling ropes are great for conditioning and fat loss. The prowler is awesome, I highly recommend that everyone get one of those.

We use chains a lot, but not in the power lifter sense. We use them to do curls with and tricep extensions, which is actually great if you have elbow problems and can't do normal tricep extensions, because the chains de-load at the bottom.

Actually, for certain elbow and shoulder problems chains are great. You just attach a handle to them and press if you have a shoulder problem like I do, I can't press out of the bottom, but I can with the chains, because they de-load at the bottom. So, stuff like that.

Farmers walk implements we have, which unfortunately most gyms don't have this kind of stuff. Then I'm always adding new stuff to keep it fun and keep it fresh. So, we have may spells in there now, which are great to do some ab exercises.

Recently I started with the Indian clubs, which are great shoulder rehab or pre-hab exercise. We're always looking out and adding new stuff, creating new stuff. We have the slash pipe, which is a great core exercise. All kind of stuff like that.

Craig Ballantyne: How are you using kettle bells in there right now? I know you've got quite a few in there.

Jason Ferruggia: We use them for a lot of different things. Obviously, the main two big exercises and the snatches and swings we do. Swings I always do high reps, snatches I will do low reps for explosive power development. I'll also do them high reps for a conditioning kind of challenge.

We do those two main exercises and a variety of different swings, two arm swings, one hand swings, between the legs, outside the legs, and then we'll just use them for regular stuff too, like pressing and rows. Loop a towel through them or a rope through them and do curls with them, swings like that with the towel or rope through them.

A lot of different things. I come up with new unconventional ways to use them too as often as possible.

Craig Ballantyne: When you're doing those programs though, you're not like the kettle bell guys whose entire workout is kettle bells.

Jason Ferruggia: No. There will be a lot of times where I won't do any kettle bells and then some workouts we'll do one kettle bell exercise, maybe two. It's not the whole workout, not at all.

Craig Ballantyne: When I was there it was like everybody came in and you had guys and girls, we'll talk about that in a second, but you kind of have a main lift, then a bunch of assistants kind of in a superset, then kind of conditioning at the end. Is that how the majority of your workouts might be going down at the gym?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, pretty much. Some of the guys if they're training for speed and power they'll do a jump at the end. I'm a big fan of jumps. They're easier to teach than Olympic lifts, so we'll do a wide variety of jumps.

I have some padded pile boxes that I got in recently that are better than the regular boxes just because I had a couple incidents, which is never fun where someone missed the box jump and kind of got their knee scraped up. So, I said, "I've got to get some padded boxes." Those are a great new addition.

We'll do box jumps, we'll do broad jumps, we'll do vertical jumps, we'll do kneeling jumps. We usually start one or two days a week with one of those. People are in training, so I'll start with some kind of big lift, and then we'll go into a circuit.

People often think circuit training is high rep fat loss training, but that's not always what we're doing. Bill Star used to do his program, which was clean, squats, and bench press in a circuit fashion for five reps. We might do something like that, which is still strength, but you're working in a circuit fashion. The rest periods are a little bit lower, so you're still getting a conditioning effect.

It's more effective when you have large groups to keep moving, you can't keep on one exercise, otherwise the workout will take three hours. Then, like I said, we'll have our conditioning finisher. Some of the skinny guys will sit out the conditioning finisher. I might just have them go in the corner and do neck or something like that, because they don't need to condition.

Craig Ballantyne: Right on. Walk us through it, 4:00 or 4:30 people start showing up and you've got guys and girls. How does it all go down from there?

Jason Ferruggia: Everyone gets there early, which is great. I love, like I said, the family atmosphere. Someone gets there and they're kind of catching up. I require everyone to form roll before and some people need to stretch out their hamstrings or their hip flexes before.

I've pretty much instilled a real dedicated attitude. I guess that's all we really accept, they're the only kind of people we attract. So, they do the necessary stuff and then everyone gets together and does the warm ups.

It's not the best system right now. We have two different workouts going on at once usually, but we have people there other than me helping out training people. There will be one group, like I said, doing more of a fat loss conditioning workout, and one group that's doing more of a size and strength power workout.

I try to start to start everyone on the same main list so there's a lot of comradery and competition on that. Then they'll just break off into their different stuff. The workouts are pretty similar, but the more conditioning based ones will have a few more exercises in them, the higher reps, and a little lower rest period.

Craig Ballantyne: Cool. Then why don't you walk us through just a little bit of your theory of training the girls and how it works with training the girls? Then what type of women you attract to the gym, like you said, the people that you attract and that you keep and the results of some of these girls you're getting.

Jason Ferruggia: Mostly the mainstream has brainwashed girls to believe that they can only use three pound dumb bells and they have to do 50 reps a set. Obviously, we don't do that at all. I've instilled the importance of getting strong in everyone that comes to the gym.

It seems weird, because I didn't think there would be that many females that were that into it, but we do have a decent number of girls who really do enjoy it. More than anything else they enjoy watching their numbers go up. They like to see their squats and their dead lifts go up, and they get excited. Chin ups, they love to do more chin ups.

I've found that those three lifts, and I like to see their pushups and their pistol squats actually go up, because I find that girls are more coordinated and athletic. A lot of times with certain lifts guys take longer, which is hard to believe, but it always holds true.

Guys take longer to learn. I could teach a girl how to do a perfect Olympic lift in less time. Maybe it's just the girls that I have, but most of them they learn very quickly and they can do things. They can do pistol squats more effectively than guys can.

Like I said, the difference with girls and guys is the girls do like to keep moving, whereas I might want to rest 90 seconds between a set. Girls like to always keep moving, so we keep the rest periods short. That's another reason to keep the circuits three or four exercises in a row, because at least they get a rest between certain exercises. So, from upper body to lower body do an ab exercise and then back.

They like to keep moving, they like to break a sweat. You or I could go in and train and just do a couple sets of squats and not be breathing that heavy and say it was a great workout. Girls don't like that. So, I do have to make sure they are breathing heavy, they are moving all the time, they break a sweat. Those are the kind of differences that we do have with the girls.

Jen, my fiancé helps out. She trains them, I train the guys, but I'm always there overseeing everything. I write the programs and I do oversee things, but that's pretty much the difference and how I work with females.

Craig Ballantyne: What are some of the numbers some of the girls are putting up for chin ups, squats, or pushups? Exercises that people can do at home that they can compare themselves to if they're really advanced women.

Jason Ferruggia: Most of the girls are squatting 135, which is pretty good for an average female. These girls have no weight training background, squatting 135. I have a couple squatting over 185, which I think is really good. Obviously, they're not competitive lifters or anything. For the average girl I think that's great.

Most of them dead lifting over 185, which again I think is really good. They can all do a bare minimum of eight chin ups, which again I think that's outstanding.

Craig Ballantyne: It really, yes.

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. Quite a few of them can do sets of ten pistol squats, which is very impressive, because most average guys can't do one.

Craig Ballantyne: That's incredible. All right, that's cool. Next question... When you're done the workout what is the general approach, first of all, of the guys and girls you train, and then yourself for right after the workout? What are you guys going into drinking, eating, whatever, or do you guys go into stretching first and then everybody goes and grabs their shakes? You're probably going to be different than some of the other guys, but what's everybody do there?

Jason Ferruggia: I have everyone do a quick little thing at the end where they do a plank, a side plank, a glute bridge, and what's called a pearl mountain, which is basically just where you lay face down with your upper body up off the ground. Those kind of things just reset and realign everything. Your lower back will feel better.

If you have any kind of lower back issues I just have you lay face down on the floor kind of like you're reading a magazine just laying on your forearms. Some of the people who are excessively tight will stretch and form roll again, that's kind of individual.

Then for post-workout the guys looking to gain size I immediately have them drink a shake. I like Sun Warrior Protein, so I have them mix a Sun Warrior Protein and some kind of peyote or Swedish Oat starch, I like those carb powders, they mix those two together.

It will be about 30 grams of protein depending on their size and their body weight it would be about 60 to 100 grams of carbs. They have the shake at the gym and then I tell them to eat within an hour to two hours right after, which would be a big carb and protein meal.

I'll do that, it depends. It's funny when you own a gym. I read Dan Johns said this once, that he lives in a weight room and he gets very little time to train and sometimes he trains at home, which is crazy, because I own a gym, but sometimes I'll end up training at home. I don't know how that works out, but sometimes you just don't have that much time when you're at the gym always training people.

For me, I'll usually just mix up something quick if I have the time. If I'm going home right after I'll come home and I'll make one of my big shakes, which will be a banana, mixed berries, dates, and I always change the fat source. If it's post-workout I won't put the fat in. Cinnamon, and some kind of protein powder, and some maca powder. Then I'll eat, like I said before, my dinner is usually very similar every night. It's a lot of vegetables and salad, beans and whatnot.

Craig Ballantyne: Then you start of the day with a shake too?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, I do. I change it every single day, so there's no output. I change the fat source, so some days there will be coconut milk in there, some days it will be hemp milk, some days I'll do cow nibs, whole hemp seeds, cashews, walnuts, macadamia nuts, chia seeds. I'll always switch, mix, and match that. Protein is always rice and hemp protein. I always mix up the fruit too.

Craig Ballantyne: You have a favorite one that you can tell people?

Jason Ferruggia: I'm pretty standard. I like the coconut milk and the coconut taste. Pretty standard is banana, mixed frozen berries, coconut milk, cinnamon, and protein powder.

Craig Ballantyne: Cool. Going back to how this is working for you, and I know you've had this shoulder problem and the surgery in the past, but someone on Facebook, Brad Pelon actually was asking how your body weight has changed in the last five years, or even ten years.

Maybe just take us through your history of when you started training, how you built on muscle at first, and then people just want to know about what you've gone through and what you've learned over time.

Jason Ferruggia: Sure. I'll try to run through this pretty quick. When I started I graduated high school at 147 pounds and 6 foot. I had been training for awhile, so I don't remember what I was when I started, but whenever I started high school I was less than 100 pounds.

I had a couple spurts where I found stuff that worked. I remember I gained 30 pounds in a pretty short period of time when I first got off of those crazy high volume flex magazine type workouts

in the late 80's and early 90's. I went up to 177 and I remember being stuck there for awhile. I went back to high volume and I found some other stuff that worked and I finally got up to 200.

Eventually I experimented with everything over the years. I've always fluctuated between 227 and 231. I was comfortable at that weight. I figured my normal adult weight is probably about 165 or 170 if I don't train and force myself to eat, so I figured that was pretty good. Going much heavier than that for me was kind of crazy. I was comfortable around 230.

I had the shoulder surgery, I tore my rotator cuff and I dropped down. I said, "Let me do an experiment. Let's see what my weight is after all these years of training and eating, let's see where I'm at." I dropped all the way down back to 179.

Craig Ballantyne: When was that?

Jason Ferruggia: This was the fall of 2008.

Craig Ballantyne: Wow.

Jason Ferruggia: All the way back down to 179. People that saw me were horrified, said they all thought I had a serious disease. I really looked like death, I really looked horrible, so I said, "I've got to end this experiment."

What I was doing was I was just eating normally. I said, "Let me just eat when I'm hungry like the average guy does. I'm not training, I can't train." I think I may have dropped down into the 160's, I don't know. It was kind of crazy after all those years that was my normal weight.

Then I started training again. I have a little bit of an uncontrollable, I do stupid things in the gym, I'll put it that way. So, I tweaked my shoulder, reinjured it, not severely, a couple times throughout the rehab process. I thought it was getting a lot better and then I just, like I said, I like to do stupid things. So, I set myself back quite a few times.

Now I'm back up to 214. I'm kind of at a phase right now where I'm debating what I want to do. I'm kind of deciding if I want to just stay around this weight or maybe be lighter, I'm not sure. Then there's a part of me that wants to show that I can do it vegan, so I probably will end up getting back up to my old size just to let people know that it can be done.

I know it can be done. If I put my mind to it I can be there within two months. Right now I've been busy, so I haven't still been eating as much and focused on my training. That's probably what I'll do and then eventually decide where I want to spend the rest of my time. I probably feel healthier at 200, but I'll go back up to around 230 or so one more time.

Craig Ballantyne: Very cool. Do you have any idea how many calories you take in every day and how many grams of protein?

Jason Ferruggia: I really don't count or measure anything. I would say it's got to be over 3,000, but again I really don't count. That's not something I would recommend. If you're skinny and you're trying to gain weight you should have an idea.

I don't, I kind of just go by feel. I know where I'm at just by the mirror and the scale and how my clothes fit. At the beginning you definitely should, you should have a pretty good idea.

As far as protein goes I usually have two shakes a day, which are 40 grams. I'm probably at about 150 grams a day, which is a far cry from what I used to be. I used to do 300, 350, I think I even tried 400 grams at one stretch, but I never found that to be that effective.

Craig Ballantyne: Then you and I were talking about John Hines and how you said he eats like two apples and some hemp seeds or something and the guy is jacked. Do you find that you get more nutrition, more results from fewer calories on a vegan diet or a more plant based even just in general?

Jason Ferruggia: I think so. I was in opposition to that idea for years. I always thought recovery was calories, as many calories as you can and that's all that matters you're going to recover. But, I recover far more effectively, far faster now than I ever did, which is crazy.

Everyone that I put on this kind of diet has experienced the same thing. I don't get sore, a lot of my joint pain is gone, I used to have lower back and knee issues that are gone, so I recover a lot faster on less calories. I think it's just because the calories are so much more nutrient dense and I'm not putting as much digestive stress on my body through eating a lot of the junk food that I used to and a lot of the excessive junk calories.

My whole digestive system is better, my gastrointestinal health is better, and I do recover a lot quicker. I think you do get more nutrients and you get an anabolic response from less calories. Like you were saying, John Hines literally eats about 1,000 calories a day. I wouldn't recommend that to a skinny teenager, but I think it can work.

For me, I'm gaining size on far less calories than I used to. So, I think it happens more effectively once you get over a certain age and a certain training experience. But, overall the idea and a great book to read about that is The Thrive Diet by Brendon Brazier, he really explains the whole thing and why that phenomenon exists.

Craig Ballantyne: I'm actually on page 40 of that book right now. It's interesting. One of the other things you were saying about the teenage kid, it's different and we might get more out of it now.

All bets are off when you're 18 years old and you're metabolism could be so jacked up and you're doing activity that you don't even think is activity, like you're running around on your skateboard and stuff. The calories just generally should be through the roof for these guys. Right?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. I try to keep them as clean as possible with younger guys like that. I used to just tell them, "Eat Whoppers all day," which obviously that's not healthy. I try to keep it clean as possible by telling them to add two tablespoons of olive oil to every meal of the day. That's an easy 1,000 calories right there and it's healthier than eating pizza and burgers.

I try to do that. I still find that most of them do need to add in some junk food, but I tell them instead of going to McDonalds just make a burger at home or have some pasta at home that your mom makes or something like that. Eat some coconut milk ice cream instead of going out to Ben & Jerry's. I try to keep it a little healthier, but they still definitely do need some kind of cheat food. It is hard when you're that young and the metabolism is that fast.

Craig Ballantyne: I laugh every time you say the word Jerry. Actually, while we're on the topic of young athletes, why don't you tell us a quick five minute spill on the young athletes that come in before the average Joes that come into your gym at night and just what you're doing with those kids, again mixing guys and girls? You kind of gave me the nutrition component of it, so what about the training?

Jason Ferruggia: The training is really basic with those guys. I usually just have them do three exercises, because otherwise there's too much confusion and they need to learn the exercises. So, at first, although I would like to be really old school and say that everyone just comes in and does squats, clean, and bench the first week most people aren't prepared to do that

Kids are really tight, I don't know if it's from sitting around and playing Nintendo all the time or what, but they're really tight, so they're not always ready to squat or dead lift. They can't hold an arch in their back for the life of them. Like I said before, it's funny the girls actually can. More often than not the girls can do the things I want them to do pretty effectively, guys can't.

I'll start everyone out with unilateral kind of stuff. We'll do step ups and split squats, we'll drag the sled, stuff like that, one arm rows, pushups, a lot of body weight stuff, inverted rows. Like I said, we'll really do three exercises, a push, a pull, and a lower body exercise for about five sets.

I always keep the reps low with beginners, because they don't have the intramuscle coordination and the stabilizer strength to do high reps. It's too risky, so we keep the reps low, between five and eight for about five sets of three different exercises. Pretty simple. Then we may do a finisher at the end just to make it fun.

Then I'll progress them into the bigger lifts, squats, presses, dead lifts, cleans, stuff like that. My other big lifting progression is I know a lot of high school teens the football gets tested, and my college guys get tested on the cleans, so we have to do the clean, even though I said the jumps were easier. We will do a clean, but I always start with a dumb bell Olympic lift, that's the easiest to learn and teach.

Then we'll progress to a pull without a catch, which will be some kind of high pull or clean pull or something like that. Believe it or not, snatch is a lot easier to learn and teach than a clean, so the clean will be last on the list even though guys are going to be tested on it. We'll work up to that. If you're going to do that it is great for guys with shoulder problems if you have bumper plates you can drop them, like me. It's more beneficial to drop the clean from the top.

That's basically it. With the younger athletes the programs are very simple and basic. Once they get more advanced we'll kind of work up into the same kind of system that I discussed earlier.

Craig Ballantyne: Now, one question that I wanted to ask that you were talking about a bit before is you make the skinny guys sit out of the conditioning stuff. Guys are always asking how much cardio, how much conditioning should I do if I'm trying to gain muscle?

So, what are your general rules and how does that differ from young guys to older guys, to guys who want to get really jacked and guys who just want to gain a little bit of muscle?

Jason Ferruggia: It's funny, because now in the internet, YouTube, train like an athlete kind of phase everybody asks me all the time about what kind of conditioning they should do. We never heard of the word conditioning when I was coming up. Looking at bodybuilders in the 80's there was lifting and there was cardio and no one did conditioning and maybe we'd do cardio.

To gain size and strength you really shouldn't do any at the beginning if you're skinny, it doesn't matter what age you are. If you have a fast metabolism, the genetics to keep you lean, and your goal is to gain 30 pounds, you probably shouldn't do any for at least 12 weeks if that's your main goal.

If you want to do some, do what [Inaudible] Yates did and get up in the morning and go for a walk. I like to the two opposite ends of the spectrum, the two extremes, either high intensity or really low intensity. I think the middle ground stuff is what causes cortisol release, which heats up muscle.

Basically, like I said, I would either have guys just follow Yates' guidelines and walk or I would do sprints or some kind of high intensity method like that. The in between stuff is no good.

Someone like me, 25 years old, I do not stay ripped by any means, I do need conditioning or I will get fat. So, I would train three days a week and then I would recommend two high intensity sessions. Personally, I prefer sprints above all else, so hill sprints.

The flat ground sprints are the riskiest, because you're at risk of a hamstring pull, sometimes you'll even pull a quad if your running form is horrible. Hill sprints really minimize the risk, because of the angle of your body, so I recommend hill sprints twice a week. If you don't have a hill near you sprint with a sled or sprint with a prowler.

The jump rope is great, it worked for every boxer in history, it will work for you. Those are really the two basics. Then I know people like to get into more of the fun stuff, which we do at the gym too, so if you have access to strong man kind of stuff, medleys like that are great where you take kettle bells and go into the battling ropes from a kettle ball swing, to a battling rope, to a body weight drill, to a sledge hammer swing.

That kind of stuff is great. If you're going to do that you've got to be careful that it doesn't interfere with your strength training, so that kind of workout might have to replace one of your strength training days. You can do two strength training days, one kind of crazy conditioning, kind of a strength based conditioning day.

For everyone else, like I said, it's either low intensity or high intensity. That middle ground stuff where you just get on the bike and ride pretty hard for 30 or 40 minutes, that kind of stuff I

hate. That definitely causes muscle loss and cortisol increase. It's either interval training or some kind of high intensity stuff or the real low intensity.

If you do the real low intensity you've got to do it obviously for a long time, six days a week for 30 to 45 minutes. But, those two won't cause muscle loss where the other middle range stuff will.

Craig Ballantyne: Very interesting. Excellent stuff. All right. We're going to get into some of the questions that have been on my Facebook page when I said I was going to interview you.

Let's just do rapid fire here on some of the best exercises for body parts. Best exercise for chest?

Jason Ferruggia: I like a suspended fly pushup combo. It's really good, think of the function of the pecks and the draw of the arms across the midline, so it's got to be an exercise that does that.

That would be on a pair of blast straps or the jungle gym straps, you kind of go down and let your arms go out. It's kind of a fly and kind of a press combo. That works great. That's probably my number one favorite exercise for chest.

Then any kind of suspended pushup or old school pushups I like a lot.

Craig Ballantyne: Very cool. All right. Next is let's say upper back.

Jason Ferruggia: Upper back, you can't beat dead lifts. Dead lifts will build your entire back, that's definitely number one. If you want a more specific I would do some kind of face pull or row.

I always prefer body weight when it's possible, so I would do the face pull of a pair of straps or gymnastic rings or something like that.

Craig Ballantyne: One of the things you wrote awhile ago I really liked. You said, "Whenever possible do your assistant exercises as body weight." You want to just maybe explain a little about that?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. Anytime you move your body through space as opposed to just moving your arms or a fixed object there's a higher level of muscle activation, you just incorporate more muscles as opposed to laying on your back and doing a dumb bell press where nothing is really activated except those pressing muscles.

If we flip over and do a pushup, now you're whole body is activated, so you're getting much more bang for your buck. Your glutes, your quads, your lower back, your abs, everything comes into play and your stabilizers. You get a lot more out of it.

Even an exercise like a face pull you can do moving your body by just leaning back with TRX straps or the blast straps as opposed to pulling a cable stack.

Craig Ballantyne: Cool. Do you think that people are going to be at less risk of overuse injury if they're doing more pushups rather than more dumb bell and more bench press?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, definitely. It's just more natural and it's a lot safer. You prime movers and your stabilizers get strengthened in the proper ratios, so there's no imbalances you develop. Everything is just kind of in proper balance.

Craig Ballantyne: Very cool. What about for building lats?

Jason Ferruggia: Chin ups, definitely. Any kind of chin up.

Craig Ballantyne: You've got a really cool article on doing more pull ups and doing more pushups. Is the more pushups article on your blog or on your website?

Jason Ferruggia: I believe that's on my website.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay, and the pull ups one is on the blog, right?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay, cool. Everyone can just search Jason Ferruggia and how to do more pushups or how to do more pull ups and you'll find that. Those are two of the most popular questions I get and two of the best articles for that.

What about hamstrings?

Jason Ferruggia: First and foremost would be a full squat. You can't beat that. If you want more direct you can't beat the glute ham raise, that's definitely the best hamstring exercise there is.

Unfortunately, a lot of people don't have access to one. If you don't, you can do the floor glute ham raise. Legend Fitness actually has a great, it's cheap it's about 250 dollars, it's a floor model where you kind of kneel and you have a partner hold your ankles. That's a great exercise.

The great thing about the glute ham is unlike a squat or any form of dead lift there's no joint stress, there's no stress on your spine, your knees. You can do them if you really want to bring up your hamstrings. You can do the glute hams up to five days a week and really have no ill effect.

Craig Ballantyne: Should you get a giant glute ham raise, so it basically is like 20 feet long?

Jason Ferruggia: I highly recommend that. If you do get that one, I would recommend having Craig come and help you move it in.

Craig Ballantyne: Then get rid of it two weeks later.

Jason Ferruggia: That's the optimal plan.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay, that's good. Quads?

Jason Ferruggia: Squats. I like back squats. Front squats are great too. I don't really like to do them that much, but they are a great exercise.

Craig Ballantyne: Single leg exercise for those muscle groups, anything stand out to you?

Jason Ferruggia: Pistols. You definitely have to be strong enough to do pistols that really can't screw up your knees, so you've got to work up to them over a few months of proper progression. Pistols are great.

One leg back raises or back extensions are awesome for the hamstrings, the whole posterior chain as well. Those are a great exercise.

Craig Ballantyne: Then traps?

Jason Ferruggia: Traps, definitely dead lifts and cleans.

Craig Ballantyne: Then abs? There's so many different ways of doing abs. Let's look at two ways. What are the exercises that people should do to take care of their back and anything unique beyond the classic plank, side plank stuff, anything you have people do as beginners? Then beyond that what's the classic answer to how do I get the six pack abs?

Jason Ferruggia: I told you I don't have anything exciting beyond the planks and whatnot. The four exercises that I mentioned before, the plank, the side plank, the glute bridge, and the pearl mountain, those are great. I think those should be done every day.

Then every exercise you do you should brace your abs like you're going to get punched. Make sure you concentrate on doing that. Most people don't. If you're overhead pressing, whatever you're doing always brace those abs really tight.

My favorite exercises are power wheel roll out that you can do with the power wheel from Lifeline. You can just get one of those cheap wheels from the sporting goods store. That's a great exercise.

Old school hanging leg raises I think are great, but most people aren't strong enough to do them and you have to work up to a proper progression of those, which would start with just an old school basic reverse crunch on the floor. There's a lot of stuff about spinal flexion being dangerous, and I agree, but if you do them properly and progress slowly on these you can do them. It's a great exercise.

Any kind of farmers walk or uneven farmers walk is great. Medicine ball work is great. Woodchoppers are great. Then your basic squats, deads, overhead presses.

As far as getting a six pack, that's really just diet. As long as you diet yourself down to single digit body fat then you'll be able to see them. Diet and proper cardio conditioning.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay. Just to wrap up some of the stuff here, one of the questions on the Facebook was a simple mass question. Sets and reps range and overall workout time when training for mass, what are the basics there?

Jason Ferruggia: The basics are you have to keep the volume low. The most important thing is getting stronger, so you have to get stronger every week. If you don't get stronger there's no way you're going to get any bigger.

The workout time should be about 40 to 45 minutes. The sets should be probably about 12 to 18 per workout. Per body part keep the sets minimal, no more than five usually, two to five sets. I usually prefer to work up to a heavy set.

I don't like to do too many sets in the same rep range at the same weight, so we'll vary the rep ranges a bit. We'll work up to a heavy set and then maybe do a back off set in another rep range or something like that. The best rep range for building mass and the average should be about five to eight reps.

Then if you're a little bit more advanced, the back off set of between nine and 12 is always good. If you just primarily nine to 12 it's not always the best option unless you're older and stronger and a little bit beat up, then that could work for you.

Frequency is important too, so full body workouts work great for beginners and intermediates. They also work for advanced guys, you just can't stay on them too long. There's a way you should rotate on and off of them, which I explain in **Triple Threat Muscle**.

Everyone else, upper and lower splits work equally as well. But, there is a way to use both to really maximize your results. Like I said, frequency with full body, obviously you're hitting three days a week. With upper and lower you're going to be hitting twice a week or once every five days, depending on how you train.

That is important as well. You can't do the old once per week per body part. That really doesn't work that effectively. Anyone that's not a high level elite bodybuilder.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay. Question from Omar comes. He sees people not make any progress, you see people not making any progress, what are they doing wrong generally? Are there two or three things that people that are just absolutely getting nowhere, what are the big mistakes they're making?

Jason Ferruggia: I've seen that. It's funny, there's a couple guys who email me all the time and I know they're getting nowhere. It's always the same thing. It's too much over thinking, too many questions. You really have to pick a goal and stick with it.

Don't overcomplicate your training. Just decide, "This is my goal." You can't say, "I want to get ripped. I want to get huge." That's not going to work. You've got to pick one or the other.

It's just information overload with the internet, I think.

Craig Ballantyne: All that MMA stuff now too, because everybody thinks they want to be super conditioned.

Jason Ferruggia: Exactly. All the conditioning stuff is getting to be way too much, where it is getting so hard for skinny guys to get strong, because they think they have to do Shawn Turks workout where they train in those five minute circuits without taking a break and flip tires, into chin ups, into the prowler.

It's never going to work for a skinny guy. That's not how you or I trained 15 and 20 years ago, it's not going to work now. Get that out of your head. Just get focused on the big lifts. Just make sure your numbers climb.

Get rid of the ADD and the information overload. Don't worry about what everyone else is doing. Just pick a proven system and focus on the numbers. The numbers have to go up on the squats, the deads, the cleans, the chin ups. Keep pushing those up and keep pushing the calories up.

Those are the biggest mistakes I see. It's just the over thinking and the lack of focus, too much conditioning and worrying about that kind of stuff. Like I said before, if your main goal is to gain 30 pounds in the next 12 or 16 weeks or however long, don't be obsessed with conditioning. Maybe doing no conditioning is your best bet. It depends on how lean you stay, but that shouldn't be your main focus. Your main focus is on lifting heavy weights.

Craig Ballantyne: And not jumping around from program to program, right?

Jason Ferruggia: Exactly, yes. Stick with something for a minimum of four months.

Craig Ballantyne: Actually, his question was about calf muscles specifically. I didn't ask you for your best calf exercises. I'm pretty sure you and I have had discussions about this before. What's worked for you and your guys?

Jason Ferruggia: Calves are probably definitely the hardest muscle to build. Genetically if you're blessed with calves you'll have good calves. If you don't, they'll be string beans.

Really, that's the one muscle that I would say you have to go high volume. There's two options. You could go high volume, which I would alternate phases. I'll go high volume for a month and alternating maybe every set you do.

Let's say you do a set of chin ups, then do a set of calves, then do a set of bench presses, then do a set of calves. Alternate a set of calves with every exercise you do. You're going to be working up to 10 or 15 sets of calves in a workout.

Obviously, don't do that tomorrow, you won't be able to walk. Work up to that level of volume. Do that twice a week and that works really well. High volume.

Stretching for calves is huge. You have to stretch them. I would stretch them on every set, in between reps, in between sets. Then I would alternate the high volume phase with a lower volume phase where you cut the volume down to maybe a third of that, but do slow eccentrics

and pause in the bottom of the stretch position for five or even ten seconds, which will be excruciatingly painful, but that does seem to work.

Then I would finish up every one of your calf workouts with 10 minutes of jumping rope. I've seen guys put two inches on their calves in about eight weeks doing that. It's brutal, it's boring, it's not exciting training calves, but if that's your goal that will work.

Craig Ballantyne: That's pretty crazy. A quick question from Keith Scott. He wants to know which year was better, 1989 or 1992?

Jason Ferruggia: I'm going to have to go with 1992.

Craig Ballantyne: All right. I told him that was an entire call right there.

Jason Ferruggia: I didn't think you'd want me to elaborate, because we'd be here for quite awhile.

Craig Ballantyne: There are a couple of other questions here. I totally blew this, there was a really good question. Actually, why don't you just explain to everybody what the difference between Triple Threat Muscle and Muscle Gaining Secrets is?

Jason Ferruggia: Muscle Gaining Secrets was more towards the skinny hard gainer, the beginner. Triple Threat Muscle, even though I just said a few minutes ago not to be so obsessed with conditioning, it is more of an athletic based program.

Where the focus was just pure strength and size gains in Muscle Gaining Secrets, there is a conditioning component to this and there is also a more athletic based component to it where we include power exercises. So, you will get faster, you'll get explosive, you'll get bigger, you'll get stronger, and you will improve your conditioning.

I do mention in there that if your main goal is size, you can feel free to skip the conditioning component. That's entirely up to you. It's still a great program for just size and strength. That is the main focus, size and strength. You will gain size, but for those that want the explosive power you're going to get that in the conditioning. That's optional.

Craig Ballantyne: That was a good read last night. It looked like a lot of fun. Just going through all the studies that you talk about and the plant recipes in there are pretty cool stuff. It really is kind of what you're doing now, a real good look into inside of your dims.

Jason Ferruggia: Absolutely. Those recipes are killer, by the way. I think people will really enjoy those.

Craig Ballantyne: A couple more questions. I did find them. Scott Addeman asks about rep ranges. We talked about rep ranges a lot, but he asked about five by five. Have you ever used that? I'm just kind of butchering his question here, but he brings that question about using five by five.

Jason Ferruggia: Yes, I've used it plenty of times.

Craig Ballantyne: It's in Triple Threat, right?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes. There's different ways to do it. It depends on the exercise. I like to work off to heavier set. You can use the same weight for all five sets.

This is kind of off topic here, but there's different exercises that are volume exercises and there's different exercises that are intensity exercises. So, for example, to me a squat and a dead lift is an intensity exercise. You basically work up to a heavy set and that's it.

Whereas a pushup, or an inverted row, or a face pull, that's a volume exercise. You're not going to work up to one heavy set that's going to destroy you where a heavy set of squats will. You couldn't do it another set.

Something mindless like a curl, I consider that a volume exercise. Inverted rows, I might do five sets of eight to ten, the same number of reps. But, with a big lift I won't just because it's too stressful physically and mentally to get up to that lift again.

Five sets of five just really depends on the exercise. With a speed exercise I will definitely do that. Like with a clean, five sets of five is no problem, because you're never going anywhere near failure, it's just explosive and you need to learn the lift. Your CNS gets fired up with each successive set, so you get better at it, you get stronger, you get faster.

For guys like you and I who have been training for awhile for strength I would do one set of five. Four sets would be a warm up. I do like doing five sets at the same weight, I think that's too much. With a beginner I would do five sets of five.

So, there's no real clear specific answer there. It just really depends on the situation and the athlete.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay. Just the last couple of questions here. When you're doing weights, do you use weighted pushups in your program?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay. So, what kind of rep range are you doing? What set and rep range are you using for that?

Jason Ferruggia: That could vary too. It's usually between six and 12 reps. You can do this with a weight press, you can have someone hold weight on your back, or you can get one of the Lifeline USA power pushups. Those are great too.

Craig Ballantyne: Okay. Then I guess the last thing is what's the best way for people to get a hold of you? Obviously, you have a Facebook page, but probably more important is you have the forum and the membership site now. So, where do people find out about that?

Jason Ferruggia: The membership site, I would love to answer all of the questions that I get all day long, I just don't have that much time. I know people email me a lot and I apologize for not being able to get back. We get hundreds of emails.

The best way is in my membership site. I'm on the forum every day. I do answer questions there. If you go on my blog at JasonFerruggia.com you'll see the members link. I'm actually redoing the blog, so it will be a little more clear where the members site is.

The members site, like I said, there's a new workout every month. I post videos and I answer questions in there regularly.

Craig Ballantyne: That's awesome. I think we covered pretty much all of my questions and as many Facebook questions as we could. Anything else you want to say about the new program?

Jason Ferruggia: No. I think we covered quite a bit. March 29th Triple Threat Muscle will be available. I just want to thank you for the call. It was great.

Craig Ballantyne: It was great. Maybe we'll do another call in the future. Jay, thank you very much for doing this call. I really appreciate it.

What's that website again? TripleThreatMuscle.com?

Jason Ferruggia: Yes.

Craig Ballantyne: Perfect. Probably the best way to get a real good load of Jay is from going to his blog at JasonFerruggia.com. Thanks again, Jay.

This is Craig Ballantyne. Everybody, have a great day. You've got everything you need now to get bigger, stronger, faster, and of course more conditioned. Talk to you soon. Bye.