



Episode 984: Strength Trainer Mark Rippetoe on Fitness, Government, and Entrepreneurship

Guest: Mark Rippetoe

WOODS: You have been in high demand among my listeners. For quite a while, they've said I should have you on. And then I looked at your background and I thought, *I've been an idiot and a fool not to have this guy on.* So I have a lot of things I want to ask you involving of course strength training, but also diet, politics, all sorts of things. But let's start off with something really basic. Let's suppose you're talking to somebody who is a couch potato, doesn't really do anything physical, and you're trying to make the case specifically for strength training, not necessarily your version, but just strength training in general. How would you make that case?

RIPPEOE: Well, we do this at our seminars every weekend, because we're trying to equip people to answer that question for their clients. We do a rather high-level seminar, as far as the fitness industry is concerned, most of which is conducted at a very low level. And what we find is extremely important is to equip the people who are doing our program with the answer to that question. And the answer is very simple. Strength is the ability to produce force against an external resistance. That's all strength is. There's no such thing as bricklayer strength or dad strength or any other kind of strength. Strength is the ability to produce force against an external resistance. In other words, a man that can deadlift 500 pounds is stronger in every instance and under every circumstance than the man who can deadlift 200 pounds.

And of course if you're so foolish as to enable YouTube comments to podcasts, you're going to learn something extraordinary about the people that like to comment on interviews done with me. And what they will say is that, *No, there's many types of strength. Rippetoe is a dogmatist,* and all these other things. And it is just – this is arithmetic, Tom. It's all it is. How strong a person is is how hard they can push or pull on something, and that's it.

This is important because the stronger you are, the easier submaximal things become. If you can deadlift 500 pounds, then an 80-pound stack of bricks is lighter to you than the guy that can deadlift 200 pounds or the guy that doesn't deadlift at all. And as a result of that, you get more work done during the day with that strength, because every task that you approach is far more submaximal to you than to someone else. And this applies to every aspect of human interaction with the environment. In other words, power, speed, agility, balance, coordination – you know, there's a list. Every one of those things is, at some level, dependent upon the individual's ability to produce force against an external resistance. In other words, there is no more basic

physical adaptation than strength. Strength is the foundation of your physical existence, and the stronger you are, the better everything else is.

Furthermore, while I'm on a roll here, the process of becoming stronger, the programmed process of becoming stronger, of intentionally subjecting your body to the stresses from which you adapt that make you stronger produces other changes in your body. It produces changes in your mind, and your mind is an important part of your body. And as a result of the things that you learn while getting stronger, the rest of everything you do gets better. I know that sounds grandiose, but it is nonetheless true.

WOODS: All right, that's a pretty darn good pitch, I think. So now let me ask you the tougher question, which is – first of all, I hate using Wikipedia to look up details about people. It's just the – It's so hit or miss, but I wanted to – I just wanted to get a couple of dates right, so while I was looking at it, I knew that you had views that were a bit iconoclastic, and it says you received the Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist certification when it was offered. You formerly relinquished this credential in 2009 –

RIPPETOE: I did.

WOODS: – and then you split with CrossFit. So I'm curious, can you explain for a layman what was wrong with these things in your view?

RIPPETOE: Sure. The problem with the NSCA, the National Strength and Conditioning Association is that the National Strength and Conditioning Association has made nobody either stronger or more conditioned in a couple of decades. That organization was co-opted by physical therapists a very long time ago. And their credential, the CSCS credential, although it started off as a strength coaches' thing back in the late '70s, has become a ticket that is punched by PE majors when they graduate from college. There are 30,000+ CSCSs. It's a multiple-choice test and it's kind of just a ticket punch for PE guys when they leave school. Seniors in college with an Ex. Phys. major can take that test and become a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, even though they have had no experience in the training at all in making anybody either stronger or more conditioned. And as a result, the credential itself is a fraud, and I don't use that term lightly.

In addition, the organization itself publishes two journals that, if there are such things as fourth tier journals, these things are fourth tier journals.

WOODS: Ouch.

RIPPETOE: You know, studies done on 11 college freshmen that somehow draw a conclusion about something. So I felt it was important that, as my own stature within this industry came up, that I stopped lending my – whatever you would like to call it, my gravitas or whatever you'd like to consider anything that I've got – to this organization, so I separated from them formally. And I don't know of anyone else that's done that. I know lots and lots and lots of people that have just dropped their

credential for the same reason, but I felt it was important to make a statement, and I did so publicly.

My problems with CrossFit were less severe, although they were fairly fundamental. We just have completely different ideas about what constitutes training and physical preparation. And I found it prudent to reinforce my own brand instead of contributing to their back at the end of 2010, and we separated from them. I provided a course of barbell training for them for about three years, a little over three years, three and a half years, and we stopped working with them back in 2010. I don't have the same level of disgust with CrossFit at all that I do the NSCA. I think the NSCA has got some extremely profound problems, and I don't want to be associated with them at all.

WOODS: All right –

RIPPETOE: In fact, we still conduct our seminars in CrossFit gyms all over the country. And you know, I think our programs dovetail in some respects.

WOODS: This is what some of my listeners were interested in. They like what you're doing. They like your approach, but they also like the entrepreneurial angle of your story, which is that – and here I'm just reading what one of my listeners wrote as they were building up for, "Woods, you've got to get this guy on." He says, "Mark has circumvented the conventional fitness instructor and created something far superior, i.e., the Starting Strength Coach certification." So you've gone ahead and created your own thing to meet a gap in the market.

RIPPETOE: Exactly. That's exactly what we've done. Without trying to toot my own horn, as they say – I don't like to toot things. But what has happened is I bought a gym in 1984. I've been working in this business since 1978. I became an owner of a gym in 1984, and during that period of time, I learned quite a few things all on my own. I have a geology degree and a petroleum geology degree, and the petroleum business is notoriously unforgiving of freshfaced young men who are optimistic about their ability to continue to make a living in that field, because about every 10 or 15 years, there's a gigantic, horrible bloodbath in the industry. And I was involved in one of those very early on and got into the fitness industry.

I developed the methods that we teach over the course of operating a gym for 30+ years. And the things that we teach were derived specifically and solely from my experiences in the gym, not from anything I was taught by any certifying agency. I took a completely different approach to this, one based on, amazingly enough, a business model. And the business model I followed was: I need to retain members, and in order to retain members, I need to show them concrete results of their spending money with me.

And so what I've done was develop a way to make everybody stronger. And my experiences with doing that, as I worked with new members, over the course of the first few months of them being members of my gym, taught me a lot about how the human body adapts to stress, and we incorporated those into the Starting Strength model. And it works. The amazing thing about it is it works every time it's tried, because all we're doing is taking advantage of just one of the fundamental aspects of biology, and that's the stress adaptation cycle. If you stress a physical organism, it

either adapts to that stress and gets better at dealing with the new environment created by the stress, or it dies. One of the things that I found early on was that death was not one of the more desirable aspects of the stress, because that's tough on your membership as well.

So we've developed the ability to just stress a precise amount over what we stressed last time, and you just make the guy get stronger. You leave him no choice but to get stronger. You add five pounds to his squat every time he trains until that doesn't work anymore. And it's really not anymore complicated than that, but if you write it down every time and then you show the guy three weeks worth of workouts with an upward trend in the weight he's handling every day, it kind of makes a nice graph. And then working with it as the guy became more advanced and the simple approach didn't work anymore, it taught me a little bit more about how to train more advanced lifters.

But the fact of the matter is that at any given time, 95% of the market is novices, people that haven't trained before, and our simple approach to it just works better than anybody else's approach. And the result: anybody that does it shows improvement, marked improvement, not just in the numbers in their book, but at work, while they're playing, while they're doing sports; if they're sufficiently old, it's easier to get up off the toilet. All of these things that, as I mentioned before that physical strength is related to, aspects of improvement in physical strength just improve everybody's quality of life. And in fact, the most important people we work with are older clients. It's neat to be able to take a high school kid and take him from being an average athlete to going to school on college scholarship. That's important. But it's extremely satisfying to take a 75-year-old man and give him an extremely important aspect of his life back.

WOODS: No doubt, no doubt. Now, can you say – is there a way to advise just the average person, if there is one, how much time every day ought ideally to be devoted to physical fitness? Now, Mark Sisson, who's in the Primal Blueprint, he's more in the diet side of things, but he's also interested in fitness and I do want to ask you about that in a minute because I know you have a different view of that. But he says it would be helpful if people thought, instead of, *Now it's time for me to go to the gym and do the following seven things*, if they made play, physical play into part of their day and made it not such an artificially setoff part of their day. So anyway, is there a way you can advise people on this?

RIPPETOE: Sure. As I mentioned earlier, the training approach is the one we use. Training's what athletes do to prepare for a competition. Exercise happens when you go by the gym every day and just walk in the gym and just fart around for 45 minutes. You get hot, sweaty, tired. You go over to the treadmill; you ride the treadmill and let CNN lie to you. You get over to the dumbbell rack and you wave the dumbbells around in the air, and you may do some pushups and get sweaty and hot and tired. And when you do that, you burn some calories. That's better than nothing. But it's not really a training approach.

A training approach involves you deciding before you get to the gym precisely what you're going to do in the gym that day. What weights are you going to lift and what exercises? This all needs to be written down. It needs to be logical. It needs to be well thought out. It needs to be designed. And then you need to execute it, and you need

to execute that plan without regard to the way you feel about doing it today. You may feel bad. You may be tired. You may have missed a meal. You may have other stuff on your mind. The insurance policy may have been cancelled. You may have just seen some pictures of your wife you hadn't intended to look at. There's all kinds of things that could happen that day. But at 5:30, you go to the gym, and you do the planned workout, because that workout is part of a planned progression of physical adaptation that you have designed to obtain a result that you want at some point down the timeline.

And the discipline that it takes to execute that when you'd rather not is required for both the results along the timeline, and it's required for you to learn – One of the most important lessons of training is that you're in control, and in order for that to matter, you must exercise that control. And it's a wonderful lesson in discipline that a lot of people have yet to learn. And that's what I mean when I say there are things besides the physical that a program of strength training teaches the individual.

WOODS: So what is your approach to diet? I've kind of fallen off the wagon from the Primal Blueprint of Mark Sisson, but it did do me some good in terms of weight and energy. So what's the problem? Is there a problem with it?

RIPPETOE: No. I don't – Tom, I have to confess I'm not the diet guy. I think that probably a diet-only approach to is deficient in several ways. You can have the best diet, the most tailored, the most natural, the most wonderful, paleo, whatever kind of diet you have designed for yourself, and eat that, and if you don't ask your body to do something harder than it's already doing, adaptation will not occur because it doesn't have to occur. If you're going to get stronger, you have to lift heavier weights. There's no other way to do it. And as we've already discussed, strength training, strength is the most important aspect of physical adaptation. I think diet is extremely critical to support that adaptation, but diet in and of itself does not produce a strength adaptation, and I think I've already made my case for why strength is that important. I think that a good diet must back up a strength training program.

And the type of diet you're on is determined strictly and specifically by the current state of your body composition. For example, a sedentary with a body mass index of 45 is not going to be on the same diet that a skinny 19-year-old kid, a guy that's 5'11 and weighs 145 is going to be on. And that should be obvious. We've got a caloric surplus on the one hand and a serious caloric deficit on the other, and they can't be corrected with exactly the same strategy. Duh, right? I think that programs that assume that everybody reading them is at 15% body fat, obviously they don't address every circumstance that a person attempting to do that diet might find themselves in.

So for instance, if I've got a 19-year-old kid, weighs 145 pounds; he's 5'11; he's a nasty, insect-like, wormy little guy, this guy needs a different diet than the fat guy. And for a guy like that, we have found over the years that a gallon of whole milk every day is the best approach – in addition to four other big meals – is the best approach to make him gain muscular body weight. Now, if you want to learn about the Internet, Tom, you watch the comments that follow that statement.

WOODS: [laughing] I'm sure I'll learn something.

RIPPETOE: You'll learn something. You'll learn that people are selective listeners.

WOODS: No, I don't believe that [laughing].

RIPPETOE: [laughing] I know that you've never gone into this before, but you're going to find some interesting things.

And for example, the fat guy. That fat guy's already in a tissue growth situation. He's proven that by his existence, and as a result, he is not eating 6,000 calories a day; he's going to eat about 3,000 calories a day, and there are various – You know, honest people disagree on what those calories might be, but I think that it's been proven beyond a doubt that most everybody that's training with weights needs to be eating at least 200 grams of protein a day and probably more than that, especially the older they're getting, and that the rest of those calories need to be made up from various combinations of good, quality fat and good, quality carbohydrates. And as I mentioned before, for anabolic situations like a kid that needs to desperately weigh 60 pounds more than he does right now, he needs to drink a gallon of whole milk a day. He's not going to do that the rest of his life, but it's so much more fun to pretend that he is [laughing] when you type on YouTube.

WOODS: Let me ask you a question that comes right out of my listeners who just flat out asks you, "What is wrong with the contemporary view of what is healthy?" How would you answer a question like that?

RIPPETOE: Well, it depends on what you mean by – That's not a terribly specific question. I think that the conventional wisdom – and I'll just assume the clarification of that question is that the conventional wisdom assumes that cardio is healthy. Some of the least healthy and least physically capable people on earth are marathon runners. There is a – what is the number, the death rate during marathons? Something on the order of 1 in 13,000 people that run a marathon will die as a direct result of that marathon. And I know that sounds weird, but I don't think I'm too far off, the death rate amongst competitive marathoners. It's quite high. If one in 13,000 people that lifted in a weightlifting meet died, you would know about that, wouldn't you?

WOODS: Huh.

RIPPETOE: So the conventional wisdom and the standard media approach is that yeah, it's healthy to run, and you know, strength training's important, but the basis of health and fitness is cardio. And this of course assumes that there's no cardio involved in a heavy set of five squats. And the only people that could ever say that are people that have never done a heavy set of five squats. So as they permeate every other aspect of modern existence, the media is evil. Whether through intent or by neglect, they are evil. Case in point: you can't possibly have not been exposed to the recent story about the Australian fitness competitor who died a couple weeks ago from what the media called "protein shakes." She died from protein shakes. You did see this, right, Tom?

WOODS: I did not.

RIPPETOE: Well, I've got a piece on it in PJ Media if you want to go look that up.

WOODS: I will.

RIPPETOE: What happened, interesting thing was this girl – I mean, she's 26 and she's a physique competitor and she was getting ready for a show. She died prior to the show, and upon autopsy, it was revealed that she had a protein metabolism disorder. She could not process urea effectively, and as a result, she had a build up of ammonia in the blood and she got toxic and died. And what do you think the media turned that into? Meegan's death was associated with protein shakes.

WOODS: Yeah.

RIPPETOE: No, no, it wasn't. It was the result of an undiagnosed genetic metabolic disorder, not protein shakes. But that didn't stop them from saying it, because the narrative is that protein is bad because, you know, protein is from animals and exploitation and vegetarianism and veganism and sustainability and all this other stuff. And as a result, the media just lied about this poor girl's death. And the interesting thing about that is that as we age, our ability to maintain muscle mass as a result of the muscle protein synthesis effects of protein ingestion go down. They become less efficient. And as a result, sarcopenia, the loss of muscle mass, generally accelerates as you get older. One of the things that's important to understand is that you can fight that by ingesting more and better-quality protein as you age. Yet everyone in the world just saw a story that said that protein killed this girl. And I get so tired of this. I get so tired of these dishonest bastards. At the expense of this girl's death, these people are sticking with their narrative, and it just – I mean, I know you're frustrated with it yourself, and this is just a perfect example here in my field, and I encourage you to look that PJ Media article up.

WOODS: Yeah, I absolutely will.

RIPPETOE: Yeah, and as a result, the same kind of bias is reflected in the conventional wisdom about what kind of exercise makes you healthy, and that exercise is universally agreed to be cardio, and nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth.

WOODS: I've got a couple more things I want to make sure we get in before we finish, and one of them is maybe silly and the other one is then one that a lot of my listeners are waiting for. But the silly one is somebody told me – maybe there's no story here. If there's no story, we'll just go on to the next thing. Somebody told me that when Sacha Baron Cohen was making *Bruno*, he tried to punk you and you threw them all out.

RIPPETOE: Yeah.

WOODS: Can you tell me that?

RIPPETOE: Yeah, that's right. That's absolutely true. That was back in – that was in 2008.

WOODS: All right, so that's a ways ago, but what were the circumstances?

RIPPETOE: Well, his publicist contacted me ahead of time and said, "Hey, we're in the area making a documentary. Would you be interested in being in this documentary?" And I said, "Well, you know, I'm trying to sell books, so exposure's good, right?" And Sacha's team got there ahead of time and his advance girl came in and I had to sign some papers for them the previous night. They show up at about six o'clock in the parking lot, and they prepared for about three hours for this shoot. And then he comes in and – And I'll admit I'm not terribly plugged into pop culture, and I didn't recognize him immediately because I hadn't seen the previous movie. In fact, they asked me if I'd seen the previous movie and I specifically said no, because they tried to send up some guy as a dupe. And I didn't play along, and eventually, it got too campy and weird and I threw him out of the gym. And I will say he came in in a little, silver-colored, tight Lycra singlet, and I have to say that Sacha's not impressive –

WOODS: [laughing]

RIPPETOE: – in like any way.

WOODS: Could maybe use some strength training?

RIPPETOE: Yeah, he could use more than strength training.

WOODS: [laughing] I don't even know what that means, but it's great.

RIPPETOE: Well, the people listening will figure it out

WOODS: [laughing]

RIPPETOE: So what's your next question [laughing]?

WOODS: [laughing] All right, next question has to do with – it comes through in some of your commentary that maybe your way of looking at the world is not altogether removed from that of my libertarian audience, so I'm curious about where you stand on that.

RIPPETOE: It's completely the same. I've been voting Libertarian – I started voting Libertarian in my mid 20s when I finally grew up enough to understand a little bit of economics, and I voted Libertarian up until probably 10 or 12 years ago when I figured that the Libertarian Party was not actually libertarian and that these guys were the same grade of fools that everybody else in politics were. And so I'm a little L libertarian and always have been. I'm really what you would consider to be a classical liberal in the textbook definition of that term.

WOODS: All right, so we all kind of knew that. I'm glad to hear it.

RIPPETOE: Yeah, we're all on the same page.

WOODS: All right, so is there any way that your views on stuff like that, is there any overlap on that and physical fitness?

RIPPETOE: Oh God, yes, Tom. Look, there is no better way to learn the lesson that you get out of something exactly what you put into it than to come into the gym and get under the bar. There is no more graphic and literal an example of how that process works. And as I've said several times, there's more that happens during a strength training adaptation than just your muscles get bigger and your bones get denser and your balance improves and your connective tissues strengthen and everything else improves physically. Your brain changes. You subject a young man to a strength training program when he's in his formative years, and he understands real specifically that, hey, you missed 325 because you missed a couple of workouts. It's not the bar's fault. It's not the gym's fault. It's not your mom's fault. It's your fault. And that's a powerful lesson.

WOODS: Yeah.

RIPPETOE: And you show older people who have never really been clear on several things that they can in fact take 100% complete control over their physical existence, that we're not concerned about health insurance, we're not concerned about Obamacare, we're not concerned about anything that's being provided to you by someone else, because the thing that you provide yourself is so much more powerful a tool to control your physical existence than any other thing you have available to you, and it changes their attitude about a lot of things too. I can't emphasize enough: being stronger is good. It's very important. But the process of getting stronger is perhaps more important.

WOODS: Is there any way that either the state or state requirements or state physical education guidelines are wrong or are causing people to do the wrong thing in your area, or is it largely unregulated?

RIPPETOE: Well, it right now is largely unregulated and I've got a couple of articles about that as well. These are all available on my website, StartingStrength.com, and go to the Articles page and look my author page up, and you'll see several articles that deal specifically with state licensure of exercise prescription. Now, right now, as far as we know, there's no effort being made right now, but it will come back up. An organization was formed amongst several organizations like the NSCA, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, in league with the American College of Sports Medicine and IDEA and AFAA and several other of these alphabet organizations that provide certification mill services, where you pay your money and you get a certification. Our thing doesn't work like that, but the rest of the industry operates on this multiple-choice test certification model. And they formed an organization called USRPS, whose specific intent was to push for state licensure of exercise prescription. The state of Texas, for example, would provide an exercise prescription license to people that pass through their certification process, who pass through their registration process. And amazingly enough, one of the requirements for having a state license was a credential in one of these organizations.

WOODS: How about that?

RIPPETOE: Now who would have thought such a self-serving thing would occur? But when this comes up again in your state, you need to be aware of that. Florida had a little round with this a while back, and many other states have gone through this same

procedure. Usually it's dropped, but they're not going to stop trying. They're building in a market, using the government to build in a market for their credential, and it's nothing more than that, because I assure you any sentient being can get one of those certifications. It requires absolutely no expertise. Our credential measures your ability to coach in addition to the fact that we require a big, long essay exam. But you don't even get to take our essay exam until you demonstrate that you know how to coach barbell training on the platform. And we've never applied for government protection. It's just – we don't need it. The market decides about us. All of our coaches are extremely busy. How many of those guys with their paper certification, their multiple-choice certification are so busy they can't stand to have more clients? All of our guys are full, because we are a market-based organization. And lo and behold, it seems to work pretty well.

WOODS: How does somebody get started? You've written a number of books. Do you remember a particular book or resources on your website?

RIPPETOE: Well, if you wanted to get started with training, we've sold in excess of 500,000 copies of *Starting Strength* in three different editions. We have several other books that contribute to everyone's understanding of this process. *Practical Programming for Strength Training* is our second title. We just recently published a book by Jonathan Sullivan and Andy Baker called *The Barbell Prescription*, and it's specifically targeted at people over the age of 50 and why barbell training is best for them. And that makes a very, very good case for why you should do this.

And I think it's incumbent upon everyone that starts an exercise program to make themselves familiar with what it is they should be doing so that they don't have to take anyone else's word for it, including mine. I think you need to do your homework, just like you do before you buy a car. You don't just wander onto the car lot unless you're just an idiot and buy the first thing the salesman throws at you, and you shouldn't do that with a program of physical exercise either. So you need to educate yourself about what to do. Our books provide instruction on the movement patterns and why those are the movement patterns that you should do. If you need some help with that, Starting Strength online coaching can provide that, but a lot of people have started doing this with just the instruction provided in the books. But the most important thing anyone can do is not trust the kid at the gym whose shirt says "Trainer."

WOODS: Ah.

RIPPETOE: He doesn't know any more about it than you do, all right? And if you go to the big, giant, corporate gym and you let the guy whose shirt says "Trainer" tell you what to do, then you're missing out on a lot of stuff. And just once again, I'm going to throw the ball back in the individual's court. You need to do your homework on this. It's important, not just from a safety standpoint, but it's important that you not waste a whole bunch of time doing something wrong. And I think that's true of any human endeavor.

WOODS: I'm looking right now actually at your online coaching. This is a miracle, really, that this technology exists that you can do this.

RIPPETOE: We couldn't have done this ten years ago, no. And our online coaching service is run by Matt Reynolds, and he's got a tremendous staff of people, the finest coaches in the world, and I'll say that bar none, our coaches are the finest coaches in the world. They're all extremely intelligent. They've all proven themselves over and over again that they know how to do this. They're very good at it, and it's a terribly useful service. And I think that you'll find that it's worth every dime you pay for it. In fact, Tom, I'll extend this offer to you personally. If you'd like to try this service for a while, I'll fix it up, and you can try this as my guest for a while.

WOODS: Huh.

RIPPETOE: And you just see for yourself the quality that we put into this product. So you just let me know about that, okay?

WOODS: All right, maybe I will. I'm in a couple of months moving into a new house, and I may have – Yeah, once that's all squared away, I would love to take you up on this.

RIPPETOE: Please, get ahold of me.

WOODS: So StartingStrength.com is the website. I listen to one of your "Softer Side of Mark Rippetoe" podcasts recently, and I learned a little bit about your drinking habits and some other things about you [laughing].

RIPPETOE: Oh God [laughing]. Well, yeah.

WOODS: But there's a lot of material to consume at StartingStrength.com. It's going to keep people busy.

RIPPETOE: It's an enormous website. Steph Bradford runs that. Dr. Bradford runs the website. She is 100% responsible for the running of that website. It's an enormously valuable resource. It continues to grow every day. We have new content up five days a week, and the daily article changes every morning at noon Central time. Something new to read every day. Something terribly informative. I have a bulletin board that's got many, many forums on it. There's a place for everyone to interact with me and all of our coaches. We even have an interesting little forum down at the bottom that we call Ends & Pieces, where the dregs of humanity congregate and talk about various interesting aspects of human existence. And the website has grown in popularity to the extent that I never thought possible. We looked this morning about 10 o'clock and there were about 1,000 people on this website. And that's not anything compared to something like Bodybuilding.com, but by the same token, the level of discourse is a couple of orders of magnitude higher than that too, so you know, it's a pretty good resource. We talk about everything. We talk about training and politics and clothes and barbells and food and drink and various types of physical perversion. There's all kinds of things that get discussed on StartingStrength.com. It's a fascinating place to be.

WOODS: Well, very valuable is that in the upper left corner, so the newcomer doesn't get overwhelmed, is that all-important "Get Started" button.

RIPPETOE: Absolutely. And there's also an interesting forum that we call Testimonials that might be a very good place to start as well. You can see the stories of people that have applied our method to various situations, to their back pain, for example, their knee pain, their needing to be stronger for various reasons. There are various physical problems that barbell training can in fact solve, and there are hundreds if not thousands of threads on the Testimonials page that can specifically show you why you need to do what we're doing.

WOODS: Well, if you can get this lazy bum to do something, then it really is super – I mean, I have the best of intentions, Mark. I really do. It's just that –

RIPPETOE: Oh, everyone does, Tom.

WOODS: It's just that I don't prioritize things the right way.

RIPPETOE: Right, right. Yeah, we can help with that as well.

WOODS: All right, good, good. I mean, look, if I'm working on something that has your name on it, it'll guilt me into doing it [laughing]. So that'll help.

RIPPETOE: Yeah, and I'll be watching over your shoulder too.

WOODS: Okay, that will also help. Mark, I really appreciate your time today. I know everybody's going to be interested in this. StartingStrength.com is the website to get started with, and we'll make sure and link to that on the show notes page, which is TomWoods.com/984. That's the episode number, 984. We're almost at 1,000, if you can believe that.

RIPPETOE: Coming up on 1,000. Excellent.

WOODS: Yeah, see, that's what I've been doing –

RIPPETOE: Well, I'm happy to be here.

WOODS: See, that's what I've been doing instead of training. I'm doing podcast episodes [laughing].

RIPPETOE: Yeah, we're going to have to get you organized, aren't we?

WOODS: Yeah, that's right, that's right. Well, thanks again, Mark. I really appreciate it.

RIPPETOE: Thanks, Tom.