

**EPISODE 225**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:10] AVH:** Hey everybody, welcome to the podcast, thanks for being here. With football season coming up soon, I am super pumped to talk to today's guest, Tim Hightower. He's an NFL running back who is just about to start training camp for New Orleans Saints this year and he's going to talk to us about coming back from a very serious injury through smart recovery work and, you guessed it, paleo eating.

We talk about his training, his recovery, we talk about how he deals with inflammation, how he was able to find the exact diet that works for him and we get into a lot of detail about that. It's pretty cool. Kind of like some of my other interviews with world class athletes like Laird Hamilton and TJ Dillashaw, for me, it's just really cool to be able to ask questions of professional athletes because I think sometimes we think that they are like superheroes and you know, in some ways, they are certainly different from the rest of us but in most ways, they are like us, they get tired, they crave junk food, they don't always know what the best foods are to eat at different times.

You know, they have to put a lot of effort, more effort than us for sure into taking care of their bodies but they get hurt and tired and injured too just like the rest of us. I think it's really cool to kind of take that opportunity to learn from professionals but also realize that we're all kind of more alike that we are different and we're all sort of on this journey to find the optimal lifestyle for all of us.

Anyway, this interview is super fun, I really hope you enjoy it and you know, speaking of asking questions, I wanted to remind you guys that if you have a question you want to ask on a podcast, maybe you want to suggest a topic or a guest, maybe you want to ask something of a future guest.

Maybe you want to ask me a question personally, question about the magazine, anything you can think of, you can do that, you know? You can head to the Paleo Magazine Facebook page and along the left side, there's a button that says, ask a podcast question.

You can go there, you can record your question and it goes straight to me.

Here's the reason why I would love for you to do this. Because I get lots of people on Instagram and on social media asking me questions and making suggestions and I like that, that's great. I like any kind of interaction but it would be more fun and more interactive if I can actually play the question on the podcast, right? Don't be shy, don't be worried that you don't have a radio voice because let's face it, I don't have a radio voice either but you're still listening to me, aren't you?

Practice it in the bathroom or something if you want. Anyway, go ahead, leave me a question, it would be super fun and while you're at it, you might as well head to iTunes and leave me a nice five star rating and review so we can get this podcast in front of more people.

I mean, think about it this way. You guys are kind of like my boss and leaving a nice comment or some feedback is kind of like my performance review. If you don't do it, I don't know if I'm like killing it at my job or if there's something you want that you're not getting. You know, be a good boss, leave me a nice review and that's that. Less me, more Tim Hightower. But before we dive into this interview, here is a word from our awesome, healthy, delicious sponsor, Chomps.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

**[00:03:08] AVH:** Chomps makes healthy meat sticks that are multiple Paleo Magazine best of award winners, you don't have to take my word for it, these are very popular in the paleo community and they really do a good job of hitting those salty, meaty, beef jerky cravings but they're infinitely healthier and tastier than your typical gas station variety.

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[INTERVIEW]

**[0:04:26.7] AVH:** All right Tim, welcome to the podcast. Thank you so much for being here.

**[0:04:29.9] TH:** It's good to be here. Thanks for having me.

**[0:04:32.1] AVH:** Especially getting so close to training camp too, this is very exciting but before we get into the details and all the millions of questions that I have to ask you and that I have collected from social media, because you know, people are always asking questions there, I'd love for you to give our listeners just kind of a quick summary, tell us who you are and a little bit about the injury and the training and all that stuff that led to you finding out about paleo.

**[0:04:55.7] TH:** Sure, I'll try to keep it as brief as possible. Man, well my name is Tim Hightower, been fortunate to play professional football man it's going on 11 seasons, some ups and downs, ins and outs. Been away from it, you know, and back. All that in between, I'm a father, I'm a husband, I graduated University of Richmond Virginia, go Spiders.

Pretty much the story, you know, my story, it's been a struggle, it's been a grind, you know? I got drafted 2008, got a chance to play in the Super Bowl, started as a rookie. Had some success, ready to watch the Red Skins where I grew up, stained at the time, perceived career ending injury, something I thought I was going to bounce back from pretty quickly.

One year turned to two years, turned to three years, next thing you know I'm four years out the NFL, no chance to return and just that really changed my life as far as my habits, my mindset, fortunate enough to get back into the NFL and play the high level. Played two years at the Saints and then last year for be able to 49ers and prepare this year again with the saints.

It's been a long road, a long interesting journey for me but you know, I've learned a lot along this way and I think those three years away from football saved me as far as my diet, my eating, you know, my family, you know, a lot of my training regimens and just my perspective overall.

**[0:06:02.3] AVH:** Okay. Can you talk a little bit more specifically about what that injury was?

**[0:06:07.3] TH:** I had – it was an ACL tear, meniscus tear, man, from what I thought it was just a routine ACL tear but after hearing more about it, I guess I tore my meniscus up pretty bad in there too and some bones and stuff like that. It was a non-contact injury but it was pretty brutal.

**[0:06:23.6] AVH:** Yeah, it seems like, I guess we're going to get into this a little bit more but it seems like the story is almost as much about perseverance as it is about eating and training properly because being outside, being such a high level elite athlete and then being out of it due to injury for as long as you were, that's something that I think takes so much, sort of, will and mental strength to keep up the motivation, to keep training and get healthier, to say like, I can get back in a super competitive world.

I mean, maybe that's just something that differentiates professional athletes from like regular normal every day athletes because it takes a different kind of mental strength, can you talk about that a little bit?

**[0:07:02.0] TH:** Yeah, well first of all, I wouldn't separate myself from, man, one thing I know about is living life and being connected to so many people. Life is challenging, life is hard, I don't care whether you're an athlete, whether you know, there are people who are you know, overcoming family, adversity, financial, financial loss of whatever it is and you know, some of the same principles are applicable with them are to me.

I know for that time, you go from being a professional – you go from being an expert in your field and for me, the process of getting back, it was almost more challenging to get back than it was to get there because when you reach a certain level, I almost said the top but when you reach a certain level, and then almost kind of redefine yourself or well, who am I really, what have I really come to know and identify myself as.

Become familiarized with, become – you get comfortable to a degree and then you almost, you get wiped away and not just starting at ground zero but almost kind of below that, it's almost you got to learn how to crawl again, you know?

Man, just that process of not just overcoming the injury but just mentally, you know, confidence, mentally and then adding different variables to a family, you know, kids, moving and you know, the whole process, it really as you said, it is – it was a lot of perseverance and a lot of just staying true to what you believe.

Never giving up and just trusting, having good people around you who can kind of really just pour into your life and when you're at those times where you're like, I don't know, what in the world is going to happen tomorrow. That's what it's been about.

**[0:08:23.7] AVH:** We talked a little bit offline about the food side of it and how you sort of, the process by which you found like sort of paleo eating and how that sort of helped you but can you talk a little bit about, maybe how you were eating before and then the process of changing to more sort of whole foods, sort of paleo approach?

**[0:08:43.7] TH:** Yeah, I'm almost embarrassed to talk about the way I used to eat.

**[0:08:47.0] AVH:** We love to hear that stuff.

**[0:08:48.8] TH:** Look, man, I was drafted 2008, The Arizona Cardinals and I had a great run there. I had a Cold Stone down the street from my house. This was – look. People don't understand, you go from being a college, a collegiate athlete, right? You're in a dorm room, you're eating on campus, the next thing you know, you're like a professional, you got to be responsible and make all this grown up decisions, I'm 21 years old, I'm still a college kid.

I'm eating that – I would call, this was my weekly diet regime, this how official I was. I had on Monday's, Wednesday's and Thursday's, I had cheesecake, The Cheesecake Factory. I will call, I had the number on speed dial, the way home from practice, they were right down the street so

I will pick something up, I had two meals I rotate between and on Tuesday's, that was my day off. That was my quote unquote cheat day.

I had my Cold Stone on Tuesday's and Friday's, I had my Cold Stone. This is what my meal plan consisted of, you know, My first year and at the time, my girlfriend, but I worked hard, I was training hard, you know? For me, I figured they would balance the two out, you work really hard, you can eat pretty much whatever you want to eat.

**[0:09:53.7] AVH:** Well, A lot of people are like that. A lot of people work that way though. I work out so I could eat like that, right? I see the logic of it and if you're still – if you're performing at a high level and of course being 21 doesn't hurt, if you can get away from it, I understand, right?

**[0:10:08.9] TH:** Yeah, you know? It does work with some people but I think really, it was more of a slow process of my girlfriend at the time, my wife now, sending me a lot of different articles, it's here, this is what blueberries will help you with this.

For me, when I can relate it to performance, okay, now you got my ear. You're just telling me just to eat at the time, you're just telling me I need to eat this food because I should, well, I'm already a high level, why do I need to eat that food?

You know, but now when you start talking about just a slight bit of improved performance, now you got my attention. I gain the extra edge, you know, it's a slow process but I think really, what happened after that injury, anytime I've been faced with adversity in my life.

My mind say, goes to whatever I got to do, I will overcome this and you do whatever you got to do, you go all in, that's the only way to overcome anything. Once you know, the more I understood the complexity of this injury, and the more the doctors were kind of stacking up the odds against me, that's when I really kind of grounded my feet and said, you know what? I got to make some changes, I'm all in, whatever I got to do and at the time, my girlfriend and I, man, I was on a full on quest to search high and low, anything that could help me recover, anything that could help me become more efficient.

I, you know, was all for it and that's really what introduced me to more of the paleo type diet, I had a blood test out there in Scottsdale Arizona with my naturopathic doctor. I come to find out, paleo was more, it was way better for me. I had stopped even red meat thinking that it's bad for you, you know?

I'm doing all these tests, my iron is low, I'm not recovering, I'm sleepy, you know all these different things. It was a slow progress for me but I think once that injury took place, I started really consulting with some professionals and naturopathic doctors and finding out what was best for my body and you know, got my body.

**[0:11:50.0] AVH:** Credit to your wife for sending you all this information, put some blueberries in your Cold Stone and you're sorted.

**[0:11:58.5] TH:** Indeed, there you go.

**[0:11:59.3] AVH:** First of all, I have to shout out, Arizona Cardinals because that's my favorite team and I love Larry Fitzgerald, I just had to say that.

**[0:12:07.8] TH:** That's great, although you going to watch the Saints this year, that's okay.

**[0:12:09.9] AVH:** Yeah, of course. I could have two favorite teams, yeah. Talk a little bit about the experience with the naturopathic doctor. Because I think a lot of people are like thinking about switching for maybe a general or adding a naturopathic doctor to kind of talk about some different things and have a different experience but maybe they're a little bit nervous.

What is a naturopathic doctor actually do? How is your experience working with one?

**[0:12:33.6] TH:** I mean, it's been awesome, I worked with a few in – you know, not everything - not one size fits all when it comes to that. You know, you could definitely got to find somebody who form a rapport with and who you trust but for me, when I say I went to every expert, quote unquote specialist as related to my knee, traditional doctors and no knocking into the doctors I have a great deal of respect for it, any professional but there just weren't any answers for me, you know, I'm trying to figure out why my knee is still swelling up.

Trying to figure out why I'm not feeling a certain way, why I'm not recovering and after you go to this quote unquote expert, you're in California, I'm in Florida, I'm in Texas, I'm in Arizona. I'm everywhere, no one has any answers, right?

A former team mate of mine, Karlos Dansby, introduced me to this guy, Dr. Jane in Arizona and it was just a different approach to my body and the questions that he's asking me about, what's going on, things that I'm feeling, symptoms and you know, that I never been asked.

It was more of a traditional route and for me, at that point, I needed to start looking outside the box and you know, he wants to take my blood, well why are you going to take my blood, I want to see how your body is reacting to certain foods, what does that have to do with my injury, what does that have to do with your recovery and there's an inflammation and you know, he's explaining all these things and he's explaining from a holistic approach.

You're eating, you're sleeping, he wants to know how I'm digesting food, how are my stools, you know, he's asking all these questions and for me, it was something of my - okay, I've never been asked these questions before and the more we start exploring and kind of piece by piece, it made sense. Man, this is why I get gas when I do this or this is why I don't feel this. I do feel leaner when I do this, I feel stronger when you know.

For me, it was very rewarding experience for me. It's something I still – do I still yearly do a blood test, I still do certain vitamin deficiencies, I still - I'm checking constantly for my listing standpoint, I've never really had to go to a doctor since. I spent four years with doctors but since then, I've never had to go to a doctor because I more try to self-check and you know, pay attention to what's going on internally, spiritually, mentally with my body.

**[0:14:32.0] AVH:** Yeah, that's amazing. I mean, I feel like almost whether you're an athlete or not, we tend to almost overcomplicate our approach to health because we grew up in this environment where you wait until you're sick and then you have a doctor tell you what to do and you say that's like medication related or whatever and so often, as you've eluded to, so often, we do not even consider the lifestyle factors that contribute to health and that proactively contribute to health.

Things like – people don't make the connection that eating healthy food can help, not only keep you healthy but like recover from injury and things like that. That lack of sleep can make you sick and having good sleep can make you better. Most of us don't naturally make those connections because we're not taught that growing up and doctors don't tell us that, they tell us, "Okay, here are your symptom and here is some medication we're going to give you to cover it up."

I think that's such a valuable lesson for anybody to learn and I think it's also kind of liberating because it puts a lot of control back in the individual to say, "I can choose, I can eat healthy food that makes me feel better and I can focus on my sleep and I can do all these things and I don't have to wait until I'm sick for a doctor to fix it," you know?

**[0:15:41.0] TH:** Here's something that for me, I think really along that process, I would be missing to not think that the doctor Leon Mailman down in Florida and I remember, I had a few knee surgeries and then come to find out I had an infection that was laying in my knee for a long time, one of the main reasons of holding it back in.

I end up getting another surgery, get removed in that, feeling better, the next thing you know, the surgery comes back. Well, the same guy college dent me, tells me about this doctor down in Florida, he's another doctor. He's more naturopathic, holistic doctor and he doesn't know the blood test, it was a little more pin pointed, specific.

He starting to tell me how different foods trigger certain things and certain lipids in your organs and different parts of your body, how other foods are chemical, control chemical responses and how your body responds and reacts to – I remember going down there, spending my three days in his lab and nothing illegal man, but just he's picking me apart, he's scanning my body inside and out.

Blood, all these different things and this was the first time, you know, I had started this process of eating healthy but this was the first time, I mean, after he told me these foods that were good for me, right, that I could eat, I need you to eat as much of them as possible. What do you

mean? You know, no. Eat as much of them as when I tell you, I was eating four to five bison steaks in a day.

**[0:16:58.5] AVH:** Amazing.

**[0:16:58.9] TH:** Just eating, throwing the avocado oil, I mean, just look, your body, these, your pancreas isn't doing this and this isn't doing this. These foods for you are going to trigger healing in this areas to really remove this inflammation, this infection out of your body. I need you to eat these stuff religiously. Don't worry about calories, just eat it, your body needs it. I'm eating four and five avocados a day, I'm like, doc, I can't eat anymore.

I'm just losing weight. I'm eating as much food as I can possibly eat and just losing weight. When I went through that process, for me, it was eye opening that there is really something, these foods are really doing something to my body, it's not just – they're good for me.

No, your body needs them, they're actually healing my body and I think that experience, there's nothing that anybody, no knock to anyone, there's nothing that anyone can tell me personally to convince me that foods are not important for us in our health and our overall wellbeing.

**[0:17:54.2] AVH:** What you are describing is like my perfect dream scenario. Just eat as much as you possibly can and you'll just lose weight. I think that is, many people see over and over again when they eat real whole foods is that, you don't have to worry about like macro counting as much and you know, you see all these people on like social media and again, not to knock –

Different things work for different people. The idea of like weighing and measuring that you can fit you know, your cheesecake factory into your meal and still have a six pack versus you just have real delicious whole healthy food and you could eat as much of it as you can possibly fit. The second one sounds kind of better to me.

I'd love for you to talk a little bit about how you eat like – do you eat differently on season versus off season or when you're training to get like - are there different – do you go through cycles or is it just now constantly kind of like eating to satiety and eating just healthy food as much as you want? What's really sort of like the drilled down, what's a day in your eating life look like?

**[0:18:57.5] TH:** Yeah, that's a great question. That's something that has been a process to kind of figure out what that right balance for me. There's some foods that are always going to be staples, it's become more of a lifestyle for me. The older you get, the older I've got, I'm not 21, I can't just eat Cheesecake Factory and then next thing I know, eat some good foods and I just you know, I have to be a little more disciplined about what I'm doing, a little more intentional year round.

There's some things, I'm always going to have, for me, the proteins, I'm always going to have some type of bison or buffalo, we're going to have some type of wild salmon, I'm always going to have some wild tuna, I'm always going to have some type of healthy fats, avocados and chia seeds and different things like that.

I'm always going to have those, I'm always making sure during the week, I'm getting some of those darker leafy greens. Somehow, whether it's in a shake, in season, out of season, I'm always making sure I'm going to get those. Now, there are training camp, that's when more so, I don't do a lot of carbs and all season as much as a traditional carbs.

Although I don't really pay attention or try to count my calories but in season is when during training is when I make sure after those practices, I will have a lot more sweet potatoes, I got to make sure I'm getting some B vitamins and you know, foods like that. That's really the only thing oatmeal, you know, organic oats, that's really the only time why I really – you consider grains of those grains, have some grains or a little more heavier carbs is right in season and right after like a heavy intense day of practice.

Just to make sure that I'm getting like I said, I'm getting enough B vitamins and stuff like that. Other than that man, it's really consistent, my wife asked me the other day, "Hey, I'm going to go to the store, you need me to get anything?" I laughed and I said, "The same thing that you got last week and the same thing."

But, what she does is you find different ways to enjoy food and I think that's been the cool thing. You find – I'm more boring, for me, I like knowing exactly what but what she has done and

different professionals I've worked with. You find healthy ways and very creative ways so it doesn't get routine and mundane and the food is great and you know, keeps you on your toes.

**[0:20:55.4] AVH:** I mean, anybody who is ever had a bison steak could probably tell you that that's not a boring meal, that's delicious.

**[0:21:02.8] TH:** No, bison ribeye all day long.

**[0:21:04.6] AVH:** Right? All the game meats, that's the other thing. I think when you can open your mind to sort of like, because a lot of people think too that elite athletes, you know, you got to do like very clean, I don't know, chicken breast and like white fish and like white – basically a play of white food which isn't super fun but if you can open your mind to kind of some different game meats and some of that healthier sort of organic grass fed meat, that stuff tastes delicious, you don't have to do much to it to make it taste good.

**[0:21:32.3] TH:** No you don't.

**[0:21:34.3] AVH:** Does your family, your wife, your kids, is everybody kind of on the paleo bandwagon? Is that sort of eating similar to how you eat?

**[0:21:41.3] TH:** Yeah by default. I got them. But I think I am a little more – when I found out the stuff I am going, I went through, I became a little more extreme and a little bit more controlling as it relates to my loved ones and you know unfortunately my wife, my mother in law passed a few years ago with cancer and we were in the exploration phase and I wish there were a lot of things that I knew now that we knew then.

So it became a little more personal to me when you start seeing, when you go through some things and you have loved ones who experience loss and declining health, you start taking a little more hands on approach and hey, when you get of age and make your own decisions, you can make your own decisions and as far as while we're in here, you know we just try to - we don't police each other but what I tell her is, "Hey, let's just do the best we can and bring in our environment, let's bring the right things in this environment."

When we step outside of here, we want to go somewhere and enjoy a restaurant and go and enjoy and do that, that's fine but as long as this is our home we protect our home and we protect what's in it.

So we try to do the best we can as it relates to that and the kids, you know I have a four and two year old son that's what they come to know. They don't know any different. You don't have to force - it's amazing but you know when you tease them by just modeling and not by telling them.

But just doing it with them, you don't have to tell them that they'll be over there at their god parents, they are somewhere in the house and they're like, "Oh I don't like that." or "We don't eat that," their taste buds don't know any different so I think that's what pretty cool because I don't want to have to force them to doing that and I want to be a choice that we make so -

**[0:23:03.0] AVH:** Yeah, absolutely. I think that sounds like one of the most reasonable approaches because if you are too strict and dogmatic and getting stressed out when you go to a restaurant because you can't eat perfect paleo or you don't know what the oil they're using or whatever, then you are not really having a decent life balance because the stress is almost overwhelming the health benefits, right? So I think it is being able to – as you said, it's like creating your environment, controlling your environment is key and then being able to loosen up and enjoy a life, I think that's what makes it sustainable, right?

**[0:23:31.7] TH:** Absolutely.

**[0:23:32.6] AVH:** Yeah, do you work with a nutritionist or anyone who is helping you figure out your food plan or making sure eating enough or at this point, you are basically just going on how you feel and your energy levels and things like that?

**[0:23:45.5] TH:** Yeah that's a good question. So I start now, as I mentioned I worked with two doctors. One in Arizona and one in Florida and it was really each year it was doing a blood test to find out the foods that are working for me right. How are you feeling during the season, what are your needs and kind of tracking it with more hands on approach then and after years of that annoying kind of understanding, "Okay these foods kind of work for me."

And knowing when something doesn't work for me or when I'm starting to feel bloated, when I am really feeling tired, I am not recovering. I'm feeling very sluggish, getting gas, all of these different symptoms and now, it's one of those things where I don't work as closely hands on with them. I'll still do my blood test once a year just to make sure and see what is going on but I am not necessarily meal planning, writing out how many, how much of this, how much of that.

So it's just more me paying attention to my body and how am I recovering day to day, how is my energy day to day, how are my stools, you know all of these different things are giving me feedback and I can now look and say, "Okay, what did I try, anything different? Am I anything different or do I need to increase more protein and more fat or more veggies." Or whatever it is or more water.

**[0:24:56.8] AVH:** Okay. So you mentioned the blood tests and figuring out how you are in terms of micro nutrients or vitamin deficiencies and things like that. It is very important for you to know if you're high or low on things. I'd be interested to know again as a really high performing athlete and someone who works out so much, are there certain deficiencies whether like you said, B vitamins or maybe iron or things like that that maybe you are more susceptible to?

And are there supplements that you're taking day to day like fish oil, vitamin D, things like that that are helping you regulate that?

**[0:25:30.0] TH:** Absolutely, so for me there are things that have been showing up pretty consistent. There are things that are coming on but B vitamins, B deficiency, vitamin D and magnesium and just the digestive stuff with enzymes.

So that is something, those four things are I have to make sure that especially when I am training. It's funny because – no it's not funny. There's nothing funny about it but I was noticing my feet started – every year during our training camp, my feet would get really soar after the first couple of days and they would be really painful. And I thought it was plane fascia. Plane fascia if they can tell me kind of start roll them out and all that stuff and do all of that soft tissue work and it would come back.

Well it wasn't until I got that test that I have to find out that I had a B vitamin deficiency. Well what does that have to do with the bottom of your feet?

So I started taking these B vitamins and getting vitamin B rich foods and it started going away. I am like, "Okay maybe this is psychological," right? This isn't – I don't have any science to prove this is me and whenever I tell my doctors something about it, they're like, "Yeah, okay whatever." So I stopped taking them again just to see and my feet started to hurt again. So I started taking it again and my feet stopped hurting.

So I was like, you know I've got to do things three times. So I made it three and seven are my favorite number so everything is three.

**[0:26:38.8] AVH:** Third time is the charm.

**[0:26:39.7] TH:** Three, so I did it another time and I said, "You know what? I don't care what everyone says, this makes a difference for me." Ever since then, I have not – the bottom of my feet have not, for the first four years of my career every single year they hurt, they have not hurt since.

**[0:26:52.4] AVH:** That's interesting.

**[0:26:52.8] TH:** So B vitamins, vitamin D, magnesium and anything with digestive enzymes and stuff like that are really important for me.

**[0:27:00.8] AVH:** Yeah, I would imagine digestive enzymes too because it is important for someone who is working out as much as you are that you are absorbing the nutrients you are getting from these healthy foods now. It is funny because even, I am sure there's science behind the vitamin B and the pain that you are experiencing but I mean even if there is an element of placebo effect, if it's working and you have less pain, who cares?

**[0:27:22.7] TH:** You know it works, I am sticking with it.

**[0:27:25.2] AVH:** Yeah, so I wonder how much of the diet change, the improvement that you are seeing how you feel and maybe how you're performing is about dealing with inflammation and is that something that you're focusing a lot on?

Because I know if somebody who I like to think that I athletic and I do a lot of sports and I work out a lot, I am not a high level athlete but I am constantly dealing with inflammation. I am constantly trying to balance working out with recovering.

And eating the right foods that I don't feel sore and tight and run down all the time and I would imagine that would be like a key issue for someone like you. It is just constantly dealing with inflammation when you really don't have that much control over how much you work out. You have to be pushing yourself all the time. So maybe talk a little bit about how that has changed for you.

**[0:28:08.3] TH:** I think the focus, that's the main focus. You know there is some inflammation that's good, you know? In off season I stopped doing a lot of cold baths because you want, there is a period of adaptation. You want your muscles to adapt and to get used to the stress that you are introducing it to. So there is a good inflammation in understanding difference but as you get older and as you increase your activity sports or non-sports, when you start feeling, get four sustained days or in your joints of different things that is a different type of inflammation that you want to avoid and your body to be able to flush that stuff out.

So I think for me and I would encourage anybody like I said, athlete or non-athlete, part of the transitioning in my mind as I've gotten older my career is not just go-go-go-go. My workout is only as good as I can recover from. I was sharing with a young guy.

I don't care if I run a 4-2 today or in the first quarter, if I can't run in the fourth quarter it doesn't matter and so the best way to do that is I have to find a way to reset my body as quickly as possible and even if you maybe faster than I am or you may be stronger, if you can't recover as quick as I can, it doesn't really matter and so if you have a good game but yet next week it takes you three weeks to recover from that good game, you had –

Well mean time, I'm consistent right here over and over and over and over. So to me there is the shift and the focus is what can I do post practice, what can I do at night, what can I do to reset my mind, to reset my body, to recover? You know, elevate my feet at night, getting lots of water instead of maybe going in and doing in three more sprints after practice well I think this is helping me, go inside, ride the bike, elevate your feet, get your shake, you know what I mean?

Doing these different things to spend more on not just necessarily building, you know once you build a base, the emphasis had to be on how quickly can I recover so I can train again. How quickly can I recover so I can train again? So I think that's been the biggest, to agree to what you are saying, that's been the biggest focus and I still have to adjust my mind and switch my mind when I want to add more weight on the squad or add more in.

Along with that I would say flexibility, mobility and just mental training along with the decreased inflammation.

**[0:30:13.1] AVH:** I feel like it's a training smarter versus training harder kind of situation but as you said, you know that this is a smarter way to go about it and even then, it's still hard for you sometimes to not do that extra work or put on that extra weight because you're tight. You know it is a tight bay athlete thing and I wonder if there is a maturity aspect that you have to reach a certain level of maturity before that stuff really sinks in.

I wonder if you had someone who you trusted, who told you at 22 that this is how you should do if you would have done it then, you know what I mean like I wonder if it's something that you have to have it, reached a certain level of maturity and maybe gone through that other kind of lifestyle before you say, "Okay maybe it's time to readjust and step back a little bit."

**[0:30:57.9] TH:** Yeah, I agree. Fortunately, I've had that experience with guys but I haven't always listened. I mean I've been very hard headed and I've gotten a chance now to share with some younger guys. I hate calling me almost the old guy but being one of the veterans in the locker room, I get a chance to talk with some of the young guys but I've had so many different experiences where I remember in college and man, I worked extremely hard this off season.

And I remember going home and over Christmas break and I trained probably two to three times a day every single day. Every morning I wake up I run to the gym and to the track and I am running hills and I am doing this. I go home and eat, I come back and do some sit ups and pushups and all of these stuff and then I go home and I go eat and that's all I did. I didn't have a social life in high school, I just worked out and I remember getting back from that Christmas break, we were testing to see where everyone on mark and where our conditioning test and I remembered I failed the test. I was weaker than when I left and I cried.

I mean I was so upset because I remember how much I put into that and I remember a friend of mine saying, "Tim you over trained yourself." And that just didn't do it, you think that would do it right? But you want to push yourself. There is a fine line between you have to push yourself and you want to push yourself.

And you have to find new ways to challenge yourself and still get that, keep that edge mentally and physically but understanding that your body is adapting and adjusting when it's recovering and when you really wrap your mind around it, when you're asleep that's when your body is putting out the hormones and that's when the work is being processed in your mind. Everything that you studied and you learned and you read, when you go to sleep your body is processing it.

And loading it and all of these things. So when you rest, when you're recovering that's when the true changes are occurring not necessarily when you're doing the work. So when you really wrap your mind around it so having people as you said, having people not just to tell you but the people who are going to hold you accountable, like, "Dude, okay, yeah I get it, you want to go do this extra sprint workout. It's extra but all right, what are we trying to accomplish here? And let's go do this."

So I think definitely having people who have been there who can do it and hold you accountable is necessary because we all want to push it.

**[0:33:07.8] AVH:** Yeah and I think at least to having those tough situations like you did where you worked so hard only to find that you were backtracking, if you take that as a learning experience, if you take something from that instead of maybe doubling down and hurting yourself more, I mean we've said, this takes maturity, it takes growing, it takes having good

people around you that you trust but having the successes and the failures both be learning experiences like that. That is the key right?

You talked a little bit about mobility and flexibility, can you tell us right now how you're training? What a day in your life is like training wise and what kind of mobility and flexibility stuff you are doing? I'd love to know what you're doing on a daily basis.

**[0:33:49.8] TH:** Sure.

**[0:33:50.5] AVH:** I did see some very intense stuff on your Instagram stories the other day.

**[0:33:53.2] TH:** Yeah, I know. I saw that and I was going to put out a disclaimer. I don't know if that story is still out but man, I've got some plenty feedback. I wasn't even thinking about it. I've been trying to share - I get so locked in when I am doing what I'm doing. I am trying to be a little more intentional about sharing things because you could learn from each other. I look at different movements people are prepped in and all of that and I see things and I implement it as well.

I would come up with my trainers and hey could we implement this or why are they doing this, would this be beneficial and so if I can do the same for somebody else, I try to do that. I don't know how successful I was the other day with my picture and shorts a little high and maybe a little bit of the legs were exposed -

**[0:34:30.6] AVH:** Oh come on, such a double standard. No one ever complains about women wearing short shorts when they're doing mobility. So come on now.

**[0:34:35.9] TH:** I get it, I know. Hey but you know what? That's the world we live in. For me, like I said, the end so decreased information and one thing that I would, if I could go all over again and really be more intentional about my training would be the mobility work.

You know there is a reason why there's not a lot of body builders playing football or playing sports in general. It's just a different focus, right? You know you have to be able to move and I think the older you get, your joints and everything, you get tighter.

You get stiffer, you get more restricted so being able to move explosively in multiple playing in the multiple range and motions, you have to be focused of your training program, of your recovery program. So this off season, again this was hard for me this off season, as I started I wanted to just give back to lifting weights and I wanted to feel that weight and I needed to feel my legs, feel a certain way and strong but it was, man your hips are really starting to lock up.

And you really start to have this compensations you are losing a little bit of your explosiveness, how can we re-open up some of those gain, regain that range of motion, regain that core control with. So three, four time a week, I may have to just spend an hour, an hour and a half on hit mobility on, on ankle mobility on core control with different things like that and I didn't lift every day - this was the first off season I didn't lift every day.

I lift three days a week and I think my body and gave my body the other day is to do mobility and core work and just balance and stuff like that and I am feeling a lot better now than I did at this point going into the season.

So you asked about the day, it would be speed work, getting back to doing high level track work to speed work, mobility work every other day. Some movement prep everyday but then really focused on every other day and then some type of resistance lifting every other day. That's chiropractor, soft tissue is a whole day type of thing.

**[0:36:15.1] AVH:** So are you getting like massages multiple times a week and stuff too like sports massage?

**[0:36:20.6] TH:** Not as much now. So here's the advice that I was given and every one, at the end of the day you've got to go with what works for you and your body and how you feel but the advice that I was given as it related to massages and cold tubs were to try to limit them as much as you can in off season because you want your body to adapt and adjust to the different stresses that change to do something to you. Now during the season, that's different.

It is not about adapting, it's about recovering. Complete recovery. So during the season, there is a lady I have been working with since 2008. She's been great, man I'm hands on probably three

days a week. We are doing something three, four days a week. We are doing something, we are working on different parts. We are trying to lend them the tissue back out, flush out whatever toxins but it is just when I do the massage, I know my body will feel a little sore. It kind of shuts certain things down so I will have to go do some type of movement afterwards and so that's just being this kind.

**[0:37:09.5] AVH:** Yeah, I wouldn't have thought of that. That is really interesting and I also like that you mentioned the amount of time that you are dedicating to mobility and flexibility because I think a lot of us can relate to the idea of wanting to be more fluid and mobile and flexible but really preferring to go in there and lift weights because it is more fun. It's not sexy to go in there and work on your hip mobility for an hour a day.

But I know from my own experience that doing it for five or 10 minutes a day really isn't going to cut it like you need to really dedicate time to the stuff that isn't just fun and isn't as sexy because that's what this could differentiate you from the pack. So I think that that's important to know and I think one of the things that's been really eye opening and helpful for me in this conversation is that you know professional athletes, you guys have a different set of rules and challenges and needs than the rest of us.

But we are maybe more similar than people would think like you still need to do the hard work of experimenting and figuring out what kind of food works for you and you need to balance how hard you're working with how much you're recovering and all of these things are things that we struggle with too. So I think it's helpful you know? Knowing that someone who can be a professional athlete still ate at Cheesecake Factory and has to work on hip mobility.

It makes me feel better. It makes me feel better as a "normal person." So anyway Tim, I really appreciate you taking the time and teaching a lot of us and inspiring a lot of us and before we go, I'd like for you to – I mean I guess you're almost on your way into training camp with the Saints right? That's what you're working on next, okay. So that's in the next couple of weeks and then you're going to be like ramping up and having to be intensifying.

**[0:38:45.6] TH:** And then it's go time.

**[0:38:46.5] AVH:** Yeah, okay so how can folks follow you and see what you are doing online and checkout all of your mobility Instagram stories if they want to do that?

**[0:38:55.6] TH:** Yeah, I will keep coming on. I will keep them coming, Tim Hightower @tim\_hightower on Instagram, Twitter and I will try to do more as far as posting and just involved and if there are any questions I appreciate the questions to anyone who is listening, if there are any questions. You learn by doing and you also learn by asking. You learn by failing. That's what I've learned and that's what I continue to learn. So there are thing that if something doesn't make sense.

Someone reached out the other day about elevating and the magnesium, there are some that doesn't make sense, ask. If I don't know the answer, I am going to check and find out about it also. I am always trying to learn, I am always trying to grow. So I appreciate any feedback and man, let's be great. Let's all be great.

**[0:39:32.2] AVH:** For sure, that's awesome. Thank you so much and I encourage you to keep posting stuff on social media too because it's been such a great platform for people like you said who want to learn because people like you are accessible to us in a way that is never been before, you know? And some people on social media are more open to answering questions and talking to people than others but I think that it's a place where we can all share information.

And talk about what we're doing and learn from each other and I think that's really important. So thank you again for that and best of luck this season and go Saints.

**[0:40:02.8] TH:** Ah look at that, go Saints, all right thank you.

**[0:40:05.3] AVH:** All right, take care.

**[0:40:06.3] TH:** I appreciate it, all right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:40:07.6] AVH:** All right everybody, that's it for me. I hope you enjoyed the podcast. I hope you were inspired. I hope it makes you feel better that even professional athletes create Cheesecake Factory every now and then not that we should be eating it but hey, it's good to know. We are all human right? So if you have anything to add to the conversation, please reach out on Instagram @paleomagazine. You could talk to me personally @themusclemaven.

And thanks again to Chomps for sponsoring our podcast and for supporting us. They've always been a great partner to Paleo Magazine and I know it has been a big fan of theirs because they are always winning Best of Paleo Mag Awards and you know bottom line, they are essentially making beef jerky that tastes both delicious and is healthy and who doesn't like that. So since you are a smart person and you listen to this fantastic podcast, they're giving you a deal. They are giving you 15% off your order plus free shipping if you use the code "paleomag" at chomps.com.

So go ahead and treat yourself. All right, so be sure to check out next week's episode with Dr. Will Cole. He is a functional medicine practitioner and a very smart, very positive and happy and funny human being in our industry who was lucky to meet at Paleo f(x) this year and we were on a panel together. So I had a great time meeting him and it was awesome to have him on the podcast.

He just wrote a book called *Ketotarian* about plant-based, basically paleo-based keto, which is pretty eye opening. I think you'll get a lot out of it. So make sure you're subscribed to Paleo Magazine Radio, make sure you are following along of course on social media @paleomagazine so you don't miss all the great content we're posting and that's it everybody. Until next week.

[OUTRO]

**[0:41:45.8] AV:** Paleo Magazine Radio is brought to you by the Paleo Media Group and is produced by We Edit Podcasts. Our show music features the song *Light It Up*, by Morgan Heritage and Jo Mersa Marley, and on behalf of everyone at Paleo Magazine, thank you for listening.

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