EPISODE 297

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:20] AVH: Hey, guys. Welcome to Paleo Magazine Radio. I'm your host, Ashleigh VanHouten. Welcome to another year, another decade, another week, another episode. Thank you for sticking around and hanging out with me, and I'm excited to see what we all accomplish and learn and experience this year.

I got to say, I was doing a little bit of behind-the-scenes research about this podcast. Crunching some numbers. I'm looking at some stuff that's gone on historically with the podcast, and honestly I don't do that a lot, and I probably should in order to try to really grow the podcast, make it more popular, and all that kind of stuff, but I'm really just focused on finding cool people to talk to and having awesome conversations.

But anyway, I was doing some of this background research and I realized that sometime last year we hit a million downloads, and I didn’t even know it, and there was no celebration and no fanfare, and I kind of want to do that now. I mean, now we’re at like 1.2 million or something like that, which isn’t as cool sounding of a number, but I just want to take a moment and be really grateful for that and be really happy and pumped about it and glad that you guys, everybody listening, is a part of making that happen, and it’s a big deal.

We’re also getting very close to 300 episodes, which is another crazy milestone. 150 of those episodes, when we get to 300, will be starring yours truly, because I actually joined after the podcast had been around for a little while and the previous host moved on to other things and I took over. So it will be, at the end of this month, 150 episodes hosted by moi, and 300 total episodes of Paleo Magazine Radio. 300 full episodes of free information, tons of awesome, smart people with just lots to say and lots to teach, and I think we worked it out too.

We were looking at the numbers and sort of statistically, when you think about how long each episode is, the last year I’ve spent like 6 full days just podcasting. Just the recording part, not all the research and the work that goes into it, but just purely recording like this. Six full days, which
is pretty intense, but very cool, and I love it. I love every minute of it. I’m so grateful to be doing the work that I’m doing and I’m just so honored that you guys are willing to listen to me.

I just wanted to kind of talk about that for a little bit, because I think it’s worth noting and it’s really exciting. For the 300th episode coming up at a couple of weeks, I’m going to do a little bit of a reflection and I’ll look back and talk about some of my favorite episodes and some of the things that I’ve learned, and just trying to kind of bring it all together if I can. So stay tuned for that. In the meantime, I got to ask you again. We’re going to do a giveaway actually soon. Maybe it’s this week, the week that this comes out. You’ll have to just stay tuned to my Instagram @themusclemaiden and Paleo Magazine’s account, @paleomagazine, because we’re going to be doing a giveaway.

But just in general, I just want to ask you if you guys do appreciate the podcast to take a moment and leave a review, whether you’re in Canada, whether you’re in the U.S., whether you’re somewhere in the world, because leaving iTunes reviews, ratings and reviews, really makes probably the biggest difference from anything you could do in terms of helping promote and keep the podcast alive and having more people see it and more people have access to it. That’s how we’re successful, is by you guys liking what we do and taking the time to write a couple words of feedback. I would deeply appreciate if you guys take the time to do that this month. It would mean a lot to me. If you don’t know how to do it, just send me a message and I’ll show you. I’ll walk you through it.

[00:03:51] AVH: So that’s that. On to this episode. This interview, like so many others, is inspired by connections that I have made online, on social media, and it’s kind of why I don’t like to hate on social media a lot, even though it’s easy to do, because social media can be terrible a lot of the time. But some of my favorite people are friends that were social media friends first before they were real ones.

Anyways, Sabrina Wieser, she is known online as Running Brina. She’s a New York-based marathoner. She’s a coach. She’s got a day job and she moved to New York actually from Germany, so yet another episode with someone who has an awesome accent. But she moved to New York from Germany for her work and found running as a way to just kind of lose weight and see the city and get into exercise, and she ended up falling in love with the sport, and now
she runs marathons all over the world. But she’s a little bit different and that she is simultaneously attacking running goals, endurance running goals, as well as muscle building and other fitness goals, which isn’t super common, and a lot of people were told really that’s basically impossible to do. You can’t do endurance training as well as muscle building. You have to pick one. We talk about that. We get into her running and what it’s like being an endurance runner in New York City. We actually recorded this interview in-person in New York. So you’ll hear that lovely backdrop.

We talk about some of her favorite marathons, some of the most difficult challenges she had, injuries, her nutrition, and a lot more. Basically, it’s just a fun chat with a new friend about fitness goals, and I thought that that would be timely, because it’s January and everybody is kind of crushing some new fitness goals maybe or thinking about it.

So yeah, I hope that you enjoy it. I hope it inspires you to do some thinking about maybe what physical goals will make you feel excited and energized. Just knowing that whatever your goals are, maybe if they aren’t something that’s super popular or they aren’t something that other people want you to do, it’s possible, because maybe you want to gain 10 pounds of muscle and run a marathon this year and people will tell you, “That can’t be done.” I think maybe it can. Maybe it’s just about being really mindful and thoughtful about your training and having a positive attitude and putting in the work.

I don’t know. I’m not a doctor. I’m not a trainer. I did run a couple of marathons really slowly. So I’ve got that under my belt. Anyway, I hope that this is entertaining for you and inspirational and I strongly believe that we should always, whether it’s January or any other time, just be working towards something. I think it makes people feel just happier and more motivated and more excited and having goals is good.

Without further ado, here is my chat with Sabrina, a.k.a Running Brina, and I hope that you enjoy it.

[INTERVIEW]
[00:06:38] AVH: Sabrina, thank you so much for being here. I’m so glad that I managed to track you down, to sit you down for a bit and talk about what you do, because I love following you on Instagram and I just want to find out more about how you crush running, okay? So let’s see where we start. We’ve just met in real-life. So we’re just finding things out about each other.

[00:06:58] AW: In front of [inaudible 00:06:59] place.

[00:07:00] AVH: Well, it’s New York. So that’s where we meet. We’ll tell our listeners we did not get any pizza.

[00:07:06] AW: No, we did not.

[00:07:06] AVH: But I mean maybe after. We’ll see.

[00:07:08] AW: And no coffee also.

[00:07:09] AVH: No coffee, because it’s too late in the day and apparently both of us, we don’t need more coffee. Yeah. Okay. Do you try to like keep it to the morning? What’s your coffee situation?

[00:07:17] AW: I’ve been much better with the coffee. I was really bad. I had like 3, 4 cups before noon usually, but I completely cut that off and I have tea now.

[00:07:27] AVH: Is it because you were just having issues with like sleep and stuff?

[00:07:30] AW: I had a sleeping problems. I switched to tea, and now I have maybe like one or two cold brews. I’m the person that also has cold brews in the winter time.

[00:07:41] AVH: Ice coffee all year round.

[00:07:42] AW: Yes, I don’t care.

[00:07:43] AVH: We’re a special brew.
[00:07:44] AW: It'll be freezing out. I don’t care. I have a cold brew.

[00:07:46] AVH: I know. It’s like I’m too impatient to wait for the hot coffee to like cool down or something. I just can’t. I can’t do it.

[00:07:52] AW: Sometimes before I found the cold brew, I even order regular black coffee with a little ice in there so it’s not too hot. I can’t.

[00:07:59] AVH: Yeah. What about the tea though? Are you drinking that hot?

[00:08:01] AW: No. I’ll wait.

[00:08:02] AVH: Nice. Okay. What kind of tea do you drink?

[00:08:06] AW: Oh, everything. I’ll have green tea or lemon tea, different ones. Not a special one.

[00:08:12] AVH: Okay. So I guess before we go down like a coffee rabbit hole, maybe just introduce yourself first and just kind of tell us who you are what you’re doing here in New York.

[00:08:23] AW: Well, my name is – you said my name –

[00:08:25] AVH: Yeah, you could say your name too.

[00:08:27] AW: Yeah. My name is Sabrina. I’ve been living here in New York for almost 6 years now. I came from Germany for work. I work in digital marketing, and I started running, I would say, 6 years ago to lose weight and really only on the treadmill without any purpose. Just really to lose body fat.

Then I moved here and I got into the city and I saw all these people running, training, being in shape. Yeah, then I eventually started running outside on the road, signed up for my first half marathon pretty quickly and then just, yeah, I got hooked. Yeah.
[00:09:11] AVH: You started running almost just before you moved here in Germany?

[00:09:16] AW: Yeah. I stepped on the scale one day and I was at a point – I mean, I was never really overweight, but I was also not in shape. I was always going to the gym. I’m always lifting, but never – Honestly, I had no idea what I was doing. Diet I wasn’t good. Yeah, before I – I would say maybe like 6 months or so before I came here, I started running.

[00:09:40] AVH: Is there a decent running culture in Germany?

[00:09:42] AW: No. Where I’m from, no. The city where I’m from, it’s the size of Astoria, here in Queens. It’s like 300,000 people live there. In that town, no. The bigger cities like Berlin, or Munich, or whatever, Frankfurt. They have a few running community. But where I’m from, it’s even hard to run there.

Sometimes when I was training or preparing for races, like marathons or whatever and I had to run like 15, 18 miles in my hometown. It’s a challenge.

[00:10:13] AVH: Really?


[00:10:13] AVH: Did you play sports or were you sort of physically active growing up?

[00:10:18] AW: Nothing. I skipped every single gym class.

[00:10:22] AVH: What do you think switched – like it’s one thing to be like, “All right. I’m gaining a couple of pounds. I just have to move to get the weight off.” But you’ve obviously transitioned into like this being a sport that you love and you’re doing it a lot. What do you think like switched in your brain?

[00:10:36] AW: I think it’s really the way – It sounds so corny, but it’s really the way running makes me feel and also what it did to me, and me as a person, as a woman also, is very
empowering. I don’t know. I just got very – more confident over the years. In the beginning, I was very insecure and now I know what I did.

[00:10:59] AVH: What you’re capable of.

[00:10:59] AW: What I’m capable of. What my body is capable of and that totally changes your entire perspective for everything in life.

[00:11:07] AVH: You just did the New York City Marathon. Is that the first time you did or you’ve done it before?

[00:11:11] AW: No. I’ve done it before. But I did Berlin four weeks before that, which was my goal race. I came back to Berlin because the year prior I was injured and I had a really hard time finishing the race. So I was like, “I have to do this again for myself to be good with Berlin,” it’s my home country. So I wanted to have a good experience.

I came back, ran my personal best alongside with one of my best friends, which is nice. Yeah, New York was four weeks after that.

[00:11:43] AVH: What’s your personal best?


[00:11:50] AVH: What do you think happened with that race that let you do your personal best? Because I feel like there’s so many, especially with running and especially distance running, I would think – I’ve ran a couple of marathons too. Twice as long as it took you. We could talk about that later. But there are so many things that could go into it from the weather, from the actual race route, to your training, to how do you feel that day. You might be sick a week earlier, to hormones, to anything. What do you think went into you running your best?

[00:12:16] AW: Well, my goal was always to run a sub-4, and going to Berlin, which is a very flat course, like I trained to pass the four-month before that. Really, really intense. Then the weather was really shitty. It was pouring rain. Pouring. I can show you a picture.
[00:12:35] AVH: The whole time?

[00:12:37] AW: I mean, the start was pretty dry, which was fine. So you’re not super wet when you start. But it was pouring. It was pouring. Yeah, I don’t know. I felt good. I wasn’t injured. I think the days prior to the race, which are very important, were perfect. I was resting enough. I was eating enough and I was hydrating well. I just felt great.

Then at mile 20-ish I checked my time I was like, “Okay. I think I can do it.” Then, really, I ran faster and faster and faster. I remember seeing my sister in the very end at mile 25 and she had some – I don’t know, like chocolate bar in her hand just in case I needed it. She was like waving at me. I’m like, “No. I’m good! I’m good!” I’m almost like crushing to the –

[00:13:22] AVH: You must have been feeling good if you didn’t stop for the chocolate.

[00:13:24] AW: No. Nothing. No. I was really like going for it. Then on New York, I wasn’t even planning on doing a personal best there, because the way I trained, Berlin was my goal race. New York was fun. I ran with the same friend again and – I don’t know. It just happened again. The weather was perfect though. It was perfect, even though New York is much harder with all the hills and the bridges and with the crowds. I don’t know. The energy is just different. I still felt great and I just –

[00:13:54] AVH: That’s awesome.

[00:13:55] AW: I beat it by like 30 seconds. But still, when you take into consideration that New York is harder.

[00:14:02] AVH: Yeah. Do you normally train by yourself or with other people?

[00:14:05] AW: No. I do train at the gym. Maybe that’s important to add to my story, is that I also lift.

[00:14:13] AVH: That is very important to add.
[00:14:14] AW: Very important. Let me go back a little bit. Like I said, I started running, then I lost a lot of weight. I was down to – I don’t care about numbers today, but back then I was like, “Whoa! I’m 118 pounds. I’m 5’4’. I look not healthy.” I have that feeling or the body image that a long distance runner has to be skinny in order to run fast, which is complete bullshit or nonsense. Now I know back then I was a beginner. I was, “Okay. I guess I’ll get faster when I just lose more weight.” But it wasn’t the case.

So then I decided to take the gym also a little bit more serious and hired a coach from Miami who took over my completely – my diet, everything. I remember our first call in the phone, he’s usually coaching [inaudible 00:15:03] competitors or like the bodybuilding guys who compete. I had my first conversation with him. I was like, “So I’m more a long distance runner,” and I wasn’t even into marathon back then. “My goal is I want to gain muscle mass and also run at the same time.” He was laughing. But we figured it out. We’re still working together, and in the beginning we really had to figure out the balance. Also when to train what and then what to eat, and it took a couple of months, at least a year until we really figured everything out.

[00:15:36] AVH: This is really interesting to me, because I –

[00:15:38] AW: I know.

[00:15:39] AVH: Yeah. First of all, I have more of like the bodybuilding background. I have ran a couple of marathons. I’ve competed in bodybuilding. I’ve kind of done and enjoyed the different training and what you learn about your body from both of those sports. Never tried to do them at the same time, but there is this pervasive conversation that you either have to train for endurance or you have to train for strength and hypertrophy or whatever and that you can’t do both and there’s certainly a misconception that if you want to be –

Look, we’ve seen the best runners, best marathoners in the world and they have a very specific body type. That’s what it is. Just like bodybuilders have a very specific body type, but it doesn’t mean that for you to be a good runner and to enjoy it at the best level that you can, you can still have a body type that’s healthy and that’s sustainable and that you enjoy and you can still work on strength as well. But I think that it does take extra work to try and be training essentially for
two different types of sports simultaneously. Can you talk a little bit about what the training and the eating is like and how it's different maybe than a traditional endurance running plan?

[00:16:45] **AW**: When I first started with him, he put me on to this technical bodybuilding diet. I was eating white rice [inaudible 00:16:52] turkey, beef.

[00:16:55] **AVH**: High protein, high carbs. Almost no fat.

[00:16:57] **AW**: Yes. I was bringing my Tupperware everywhere I went. I wasn't really drinking much. Not at all. No alcohol. I also, I ate at certain hours. It was 3:00? “All right. I got to eat.” 6:00? “All right. I got to eat.” Before I went to bed, I had Greek yoghurt, whatever. “All right. I got to eat.” Even though I wasn't hungry. That helped though that I was so strict. It really helped me to have enough calories in order to do both at the same time. What I had to figure out was really, “Okay. When I’m running, let’s say 5 times a week, when I do I go to the gym and train legs?” Because that was – Yeah. I got so skinny. There was nothing left. I was like, “Okay. When do I do this?”

Now it's really that, let's say I run hard Tuesdays and Thursdays, meaning like speed workouts, or the track or whatever. That's the days where I also train my legs, because it's less volume. It means that I wake up at like 5 AM in the morning. Do my run. Go to work. Come back and then at night I go to the gym.

Then the following days, either upper body or rest or recovery run. It's really finding the perfect balance when to place the workouts and then of course also when to eat what. On days where I'm not running, of course my carbs are a little lower. For example, on the weekends, when I have my long runs, my calories are really, really high because I try to lift or train my legs up to like 13 miles. I would run and have marathon in the morning for training, not the real race. Then I could go to the gym at night and train legs. It took a while. It sounds so easy to talk about, but really it took a while until my body was addressed to that intensity.

[00:18:46] **AVH**: Was this really because you wanted to sort of build muscle for aesthetics and for just general life strength, or was there a specific goal in mind? Like you just want to look
better. You just want to be stronger. Did you think it would make your running better? What was the main –

[00:19:04] AW: I think everything. I never wanted to compete or go on stage even though my guy from Miami always said, “You should try. You should try.” But that would really mean to that degree –

[00:19:15] AVH: That’s a different kind of training –

[00:19:16] AW: Yeah, and also different kind of training. Yeah. But, honestly, I really like the way the body looks. I like looking strong. I like being strong. I love lifting heavy, and – I don’t know. I mean, there is this misconception in runners that they think really that some of them, they lift, but they use bodyweight or lightweight or –

[00:19:40] AVH: Super high reps, low weight.

[00:19:42] AW: Yeah. We could go to a gym now and we could train together. Even though – Yeah.

[00:19:49] AVH: That’s awesome. Do you train the same when you are actively training for a race versus like an off season? Are you training basically the same year round or do you take periods of like less volume?

[00:20:00] AW: Right now, like I said, I just did the two marathons. Of course, you will get to a point where you’re lose a little of your muscles, because you cannot maintain all that. Right now my volume at the gym is much higher. I try to lift even heavier and my focus is more at the gym right now until like the end of the year. Then I start training for my next half marathon. Then I’m going back to this hopefully perfect balance of doing both.

Right now I feel it, like it wasn’t perfect yesterday. For example, I trained legs, because my schedule was to make stuff and this morning I had to run a really, really, really fast test run to test the pace. Of course, it would have better if I didn’t go to the gym yesterday. Of course, it’s always different.
[00:20:42] AVH: How many races are you trying to do every year?

[00:20:46] AW: I have a few that I always want to do, like the New York City Half, for example. Next year I'll go to Rio, to Brazil, to do the marathon there. I'm trying to always do two, three marathons, and then a couple of halves.

[00:21:00] AVH: Okay. Which distance do you like better?

[00:21:03] AW: After doing those great marathons right now, just recently I feel like the marathon distance is my favorite. I like training for the marathon. It's a better training. The half marathon training is much harder, because you really run really, really fast.

[00:21:17] AVH: You have to try to go quicker.

[00:21:19] AW: Yeah. Again, I think since I'm doing both at the same time, I think I'm not 100% great in both sports. I think if I only did one, I could be much faster or better. But since I've been doing both at the same time. For example, I'm very strong on the bridges. I haven't practiced any hill work leading up to the New York City Marathon, and there are – like he first mile is the Verrazano Bridge, which is like high up. I had no issues. So that's very beneficial.


[00:21:54] AVH: Interesting. Going back to training, running, training alone versus with people. Do you have a team or are you doing it by yourself or both?

[00:22:03] AW: Both. I run with Adidas runners here in New York City, which is a running community. They have this nice quote, they say, “We have a place for every pace.” It just fits perfect in really how I think about runners today, that there is no body image. A runner doesn’t have to look a certain way. They come in all shapes in sizes, ages and paces, and that’s really for me the place where I feel most comfortable.
We have – one of the coaches that I run with, he just run a 70-minute half marathon time. For people who don’t really run, but that’s really, really fast, and for him that wasn’t even like his best time. We have those people, but also we have beginners who just start and they run a 12-minute mile, which is totally fine. Yeah, I do that.

Then I met most of my friends there. Really good people. But I also like to run by myself. Yeah, it’s kind of like meditation for me. A city like that, it’s – I don’t know, like a quiet place for me. Put your headphones in and listen to a podcast or whatever. Listen to yours.

[00:23:09] AVH: There you go. Thank you. I don’t even have to pay her for that.


[00:23:13] AVH: No. I mean, I feel the exact same way. When I first moved to New York, I went to the CrossFit gym, because that was the period of my life that I was in. I was just learning about CrossFit and it was like probably 8 or 7. So it was like still kind of like very much growing, but not as established as it is now, and there’s like one gym sort of in like the city. It was on 26th street, and I went there and that’s where I made my first friends when I moved to the city and I didn’t know anyone. It’s an amazing built-in community, because obviously you already have a shared passion, but you also often times have – like you can come, like you said, from all different walks of life, but you have a passion for like challenging yourself, for exercise, for the feeling that that kind of gives you. So it’s so cool.

I agree with you too. I feel the same way about training. I think it’s great to have a balance between training with people and training on your own for different reasons. I was just in Tampa training with some of my meathead friends at this bodybuilding gym that’s really sort of like – it’s like a Mecca for like really high-level bodybuilders, and I work out – when I’m in the gym lifting weights, 99% of the time I’m by myself and I know what I’m doing and I get in there and I don’t have to talk to anybody, and it’s great, and it’s like this meditation. You can be in your own head.

But sometimes being with other people, and especially people who are better than you, but sometimes people that you’re teaching as well, it’s so valuable, because it’s humbling. You’re
reminded that you don’t know as much as you think you do. It makes you pay more attention and work a little bit harder when there are other people there too, and it’s fun. It’s fun to just have people that are sort of like friends that are kind of hanging out with you, especially if they’re working hard too. I can be like, “All right. Less talk, more workout here.” But when there are super high-level people too that are just pushing you, it’s like incredible energy. So I love kind of having both.

But I do think, again, having had some running experience at a much lower level than you, I get that there – I think there really is a unique endorphin mix that happens from endurance running that does not happen from other things. I have won a bodybuilding competition and I know what that feels like on stage. That’s amazing. I’ve done some other sports, and whatever, I swam and I did some CrossFit stuff. It feels great. But there really isn’t anything that feels like when you – I feel like I get the same feeling that you would even if I’m running half as fast. It’s literally –

[00:25:32] AW: I’m not even that fast.

[00:25:33] AVH: It’s the feeling, but it’s like that combination of endorphins when your stride just starts feeling effortless and your breathing is effortless and you just feel – Like it just feels good and everything is just working. It’s an incredible feeling.

I remember training – I ran a couple of marathons with my stepdad. It’s funny, because we’ll talk about your training partners. But my training partner was twice my age and twice as tall as me. He was 6’6”. His background, he was nationally ranked triple jumper, a track athlete. He was this tall guy with these massive, like big legs, and he was never a distance runner, but he was a track athlete. He kind of had more of an inclination towards this than I did. I’m not built for like distance or speed. I’m built to like do bicep curls. I don’t know. But I was up for the challenge.

We trained together and we worked it out that I was running more than like two strides for every one of his. It’s just ridiculous. Yeah, it was so much fun anyway. It’s such a rewarding thing. Again, as somebody who would never probably try to do this sport in any way competitively or probably never run another one, because I ran too and I’m like, “That’s enough. I don’t need to do this myself anymore.” But it really is so empowering when you set a goal like that is challenging and difficult, that’s really easy to quit and you don’t. I mean, it’s incredible. It’s life
changing, I think, because I really felt like the first one I did, I was 19-years-old. I was pretty young. That's right. Older people tend to do better with endurance running for a lot of reasons, and I remember thinking like as a young woman, I'm like, “I did this. I can do other things now, because I did this, and I got through it.”

I'm not telling anybody to run a marathon or not run a marathon, but I think that there's a lot to be said in terms of empowering yourself and character building and just picking whatever that goal is and just seeing it through.


[00:27:28] AVH: Yeah. Okay. Let's talk a little bit more about food, because I'm interested in your diet, and is it still kind of body building-ish?

[00:27:41] AW: Like I said, I still work with him, but I'm a little less strict now. I would say I was very almost obsessed with my diet. Now I'm not anymore. Now when I go somewhere, to a restaurant – I go to restaurants again.


[00:27:58] AW: There I was a time where I didn’t go, really. “Oh, there’s salt on my food. Please.” But this is all in the past. But if I want to have a glass of wine, I have a glass of wine.

Just before I got here, like I said, I had a meeting with my coworkers and there were cookies on the table, “Okay, it's all balance.” I think now it’s really more about – I still want to look good. It’s not – most importantly now is I want to feel good inside. It's more really for my mind, and that I feel healthy. Yeah. But, yeah, my diet is I still eat four times a day. My breakfast is always the same. It’s always egg whites and oatmeal with some sort of fruits, like blueberries or something, peanut butter. Lunch, it's usually a salad or no carbs, but protein. Then I have another meal around 3, and then my dinner.
[00:28:53] AVH: Okay. Do you pay attention to sort of like macros at all or is it kind of like, you have a standard protein, you’re more carbs on heavy training days and less on others. How is the fat situation? Because everybody cares so much about fat these days.

[00:29:09] AW: I don’t really do fat.

[00:29:11] AVH: No? Have you experimented with higher fat?

[00:29:13] AW: We tried. Yeah. We tried. We tried both. What I just respond better to, and it’s really carbs. But like I said, I still have the privilege of – the way we do it is I send in my schedule for the week on Saturdays. Then on Sundays, I’m getting my diet. I just really follow whatever he’s telling me, but it’s small portions. If I skip a meal sometimes, it’s fine. Then my dinner is just bigger.

[00:29:39] AVH: How did you make that switch between – Because this is something I’ve talked about before and it’s something that is common to a lot of athletes and a lot of women in general who tend to border on either obsessive or you could say neurotic or you could say orthorexia. You could say all these things about people who spend so much time trying to either perfect their diet or just be so on top of it that it becomes dysfunctional and a source of stress in their life.

How did you stop doing that and find more balance?

[00:30:08] AW: I got really injured. My body was falling apart. If you don’t eat well or not enough when you’re running, and I really felt that when both came together, the bodybuilding and then the running, it was just such a high intensity that – again, he didn’t know really in the beginning what we were doing. But then I got stress factors and got a really bad hip injury. I don’t know. I just felt that it wasn’t healthy anymore. My sleep wasn’t good. I was stressed, and these just all came together.

[00:30:45] AVH: Okay. Really, I mean, I think it comes down to sort of an awareness of your body and also being able to recognize that the choices that you’re making are not always in your best interest sometimes.
[00:30:59] AW: I mean, think about it. You probably know. “Oh my God! We’re so boring to go out with.” Right?


[00:31:05] AW: It’s true. You can’t drink. I don’t eat this. I don’t eat that. It got to a point where it’s just annoying. Sometimes I would go on vacation and we book like really nice hotels and there was this great dinner buffet and I wasn’t even able to enjoy it. I don’t know. It took me a while really to get there. At a point I was just like, “You know what? It’s not that serious.”

Sometimes I would look in the mirror and if I don’t see my six pack I’m like, “Oh God! I’m fat,” and that’s not healthy. That’s not good. Now after New York, I looked in the mirror and there was nothing. No abs. But really because I didn’t care that much anymore, but now it’s over and I know, “Okay. I know how to deal with it,” and it comes back. It’s not that serious.

[00:31:54] AVH: I’ve talked about it a lot on the podcast, the concept of moderation actually being way harder than following a specific diet, like people talk about fasting is so difficult or like a bodybuilding prep. How could you ever do that? How could you not eat the things you like for three months? I’m like, “From my experience with myself and almost everyone I’ve ever talked to who’s been through this, following rules is pretty easy.” It’s not to say that it’s not monotonous or boring or not fun sometimes. But if someone hands you a piece of paper and says, “This is exactly what you do. Do nothing that isn’t written here.” That’s very easy to do once you’ve committed to it. Especially if you’re paying a coach or you’ve signed up for an event and you really feel that sort of sense of obligation, that’s super easy to do.

But if someone just tells you like, “Hey, you want to look the best you can possibly look. You want to perform the best that you can perform and you want to enjoy your life and have treats and like enjoy things that you enjoy.” What the hell do you do with that information? That’s so difficult. It’s also something that’s constantly changing too, because as your goals change, as you get older, maybe you have a kid. Maybe you get sick. Maybe you do a different sport. These things are all changing.
What I have been trying to do, and I speak it out loud for other people and also for myself, is to start looking at that as more of like a fun challenge than like, “Oh my God! How am I ever going to figure this out?” Because it is something that constantly changes, but that’s a gift that we have, is to be able to kind of experiment with things and try new things and keep learning about ourselves. It’s not always easy, but I think that we should feel grateful that we have the opportunity to do that.

[00:33:28] AW: Yeah, I know. Especially for me, really, like just keeping up with my training schedule already requires so much dedication and a lot of things that I cannot go to or I have to skip certain things. My sleep for example is the most important part. I would go to a party and if I know I have to run in the morning because I’m training for whatever, I leave. This is already a lot. Then also like care so much to not eat that donut or to not – It’s just too much for me. Last year, I was a little bit stricter with my diet than I was now. I mean, the results are better. I don’t even think it’s so crazy.

[00:34:11] AVH: What about rest and recovery? Because you talked about sleep being very important and I think that with someone who trains as much as you do, your ability to recover, because as you know, and everybody knows, getting stronger, the recovery process happens while you’re resting, not when you’re running or lifting weights. How do you make sure that you’re recovered and what are like your sort of recovery things that you do in your lifestyle?

[00:34:35] AW: I pay attention that I do have 7 to 8 hours of sleep. If I don’t have that, I really feel it.

[00:34:42] AVH: Will you change your training? Like, say, whatever reason your stressed out, you got like 5-1/2 hours sleep last night, you’re going to adjust based on that.

[00:34:49] AW: Yeah. That’s also something that had changed over the years. Before I would have pushed it. Now I’m like, “No. I’m listening to my body. I feel tired.”

[00:34:57] AVH: Do you have sleep trackers and stuff? Do you wear the ore ring or whatever?
[00:35:01] AW: No. I have a really good mattress. I got lucky. The company is called Eight Sleep, and I worked with them and they sent me one.

[00:35:08] AVH: Nice.

[00:35:09] AW: Yeah, it’s pretty expensive though, but it’s great. It really tracks your sleep and it has a heating and cooling system. When I go to sleep, there’s like a little pot next to the mattress and it’s a little warm. It gets like nice and comfy and I fall asleep like fast now. I had such issues falling asleep before. Then during the night, it cools you down, and then it wakes you up naturally with the warmer temperatures again. It’s amazing.

[00:35:31] AVH: Nice! That’s cool.

[00:35:33] AW: I have an app on my phone and it shows you your sleep. It tracks your sleep basically and it gives you a score. Huge difference.

[00:35:43] AVH: What about any other kind of recovery stuff? Do you do any of the like massage therapy or acupuncture, cryo stuff, anything?

[00:35:51] AW: I work with one of my friends. She’s a physical therapist. So I see her once a week where she stretches me and everything, because that’s really something I’m really bad at, most runners are, stretching, foam rolling and stuff.

[00:36:05] AVH: Nobody wants to do that.

[00:36:05] AW: But it’s still important. So I’ll do that. Well, some of my runs, like I said, are recovery runs. You run them in a very slow pace. Yeah. That’s basically it.

[00:36:16] AVH: Okay. You’re a pretty big deal on social media. Yes. How does that happen? Your Instagram, I think that it’s like a good combo of like your life, but also really just showing your love of running and that process. Is that what you set out to do? What’s your goal with like sort of your online presence as far as running?
[00:36:38] AW: Oh! That’s such a good topic. I never really had the intention of getting there where it’s now. I think it really happened naturally just by me sharing my journey, from what I just told you. I think I created this account 7 years ago. I think I still have the very old photos there. It’s funny.

I don’t know, once my running got more serious, I thought about creating my blog, runningbrina.com, where I really share everything, from nutrition workouts, supplement, everything. Yeah, it just grew. My intention was never to be an influencer or whatever you want to call it, even though I don’t even feel like that’s how we should call each other. Yeah.

[00:37:26] AVH: Would it ever be something that you want to like – I don’t know this and you don’t have to talk about whatever you’re uncomfortable with, but is it something that you would want to start doing more as a job in terms of, I don’t know, getting sponsored for runs, or being sponsored by companies that are supporting your athletic endeavors. Is that something that you’re interested in or is this still – it’s always just going to be kind of like, this is your hobby and what you love to do and you keep it separate.

[00:37:54] AW: I do have a full-time job, which I love, and I really always want to do that, because you never know what’s happening in the world. What if someone deletes Instagram? Oh my God!

[00:38:07] AVH: All the Instagram influencers are done. Yeah.

[00:38:09] AW: What happened? But it is already – my Instagram and my blog and everything is already a job for me. I put a lot of work aside from my full time job into this. You saw photos. I’ve been trying to really have authentic but high-quality pictures. Yeah. I mean, I’ve been working with really great companies so far. But doing it full-time, I don’t think so.

[00:38:36] AVH: The problem with that sometimes, and that’s not the case with everyone, because I know actually the lines blur a lot between my work and my passion. So I can maybe kind of speak to it on different levels, but sometimes when you turn what you love into a job, it can take a lot of the love out of it. Because when it becomes either an obligation or when there’s monetary value attached to something that you love to do, it can be sort of problematic.

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Sometimes that works for people and sometimes it doesn’t, but I think always being clear about what you want to get out of what you’re doing I think is really important.

[00:39:09] **AW**: Yeah. My number one priority is really to share my experience, my knowledge about running, and races, and everything that I experience. If there’s a company that likes what I do and is like, “Hey, I’ll give you whatever. Come to wherever, in Miami, and run the half marathon.” Cool. I go. But I would never try to force it. I think the past years, it’s really what happened. I feel like everybody – Sorry. Just like social media influence is a word, but I think it’s important. Like, what’s your story? What are you sharing? Does it give any value to the world? If not, what –

[00:39:52] **AVH**: Yeah. I think a lot of people aren’t asking that question. I think that is kind of the downside of social media, the great thing, that we can all share stories and communicate on a platform that you don’t have to pay for I suppose in some ways is a good thing, but people don’t always stop to ask like, “Is this providing value? Is this harming anyone? Is it harming myself?” There are a lot of issues that go into that.

Okay. Another question I wanted to ask you, it has nothing to do with that, because we’ll just skip right over the influencer stuff.

[00:40:22] **AW**: Okay.

[00:40:23] **AVH**: Supplements. Do you take anything? Do you take anything regularly to kind of assist with anything?

[00:40:28] **AW**: I mean, I’ll take the usual things, like calcium, magnesium, several vitamins. What really helped me during my training is some [inaudible 00:40:40]. Also something I had to figure out, but that really helps me when it comes to not breaking down my muscles. I fuel a lot during my runs with gels from a certain brand that I use. What else? Protein powder, yeah.

[00:40:58] **AVH**: What’s your favorite – walk me through – you’re running a marathon tomorrow. Walk me through your meals the night before, before you run, during the run and after the run. We need to hear it all
[00:41:12] AW: It’s the worst.

[00:41:13] AVH: We need to hear it all.

[00:41:14] AW: The day before, I start with a regular breakfast, which is, like I said, my egg whites and the oatmeal, but then high carbs. In Berlin, I seriously ate – my mom, she made me like a cup of potatoes. I would say like 10 of those, like the big ones you get in Germany. I was eating. I was with Adidas sitting there. I was just snacking my potatoes.

[00:41:38] AVH: Butter? How are they made?


[00:41:41] AVH: But like boiled or like baked or –


[00:41:48] AW: But I start with this like three days prior already to the days.

[00:41:51] AVH: Carb loading like up to three days in advance.


[00:42:01] AVH: BCAA stuff.

[00:42:02] AW: Yeah, that too. Like I said, potatoes, potatoes. The night before, pasta. Then you already show like you feel so full, and then the morning you wake up and you’re just like, “Whoa! I have to breakfast now.” Banana, oatmeal again.
[00:42:21] **AVH**: Is this problematic for your – I mean, I know you need carbs and you need energy to run the way you’re going to run, and I’m sure you’ve experimented with other things. So this is why I’m asking your feedback on this, because there are a lot of Keto endurance runners, and there are people who do different approaches to it, but with this like super carb loading, does that like heavy, full feeling affect the way you run?

[00:42:43] **AW**: No. For some reason, no, but you do feel that way. You feel like a whale.

[00:42:49] **AVH**: It’s sort of like a necessary evil, like you need it, because if you didn’t do that –

[00:42:51] **AW**: To me, really, it helps. But I have friends who are vegans or who eat Keto, whatever they find. But I honestly have no experience on that really, because I never really done it much. Then during the race, you have gels every 5 miles-ish, every 45 minutes.

[00:43:13] **AVH**: Those are gross.

[00:43:14] **AW**: Ugh!

[00:43:14] **AVH**: I remember doing the gel thing a little bit during my days, and they’re not good. How have they not figured out how to make those more delicious? What about those – Do you know who Courtney Duawalter is?

Okay. This will lead into another question that I want to ask, but she’s an ultra-endurance runner that I interviewed a while back for a different podcast, and I can put that link in the show notes, because it was one of my favorite interviews. I love her so much. She ran –

[00:43:38] **AW**: I hope you’ll say that about me one day.

[00:43:40] **AVH**: Yes! 100%.

[00:43:41] **AW**: [inaudible 00:43:41].

[00:43:42] **AVH**: You’re amazing.
[00:43:43] AW: [inaudible 00:43:43].

[00:43:44] AVH: This woman, she ran the – It’s called the Moab 240 or something and it’s like 240, I want to say miles, maybe kilometers. In any case, a long-ass run, and she won. She beat everybody. All men, all women, and she beat the next fastest runner, who was a man, by like 9-1/2 hours. This chick is crazy.

But her approach was she’s sort of like finding this balance like you did where she’s like, “I don’t track everything. I don’t track every single thing I eat. I run intuitively. When I feel like it’s not good, I don’t do it and I eat what I want and I enjoy myself.” I’m like, “There’s something to that not laziness, not lack of caring, but like a more joy filled approach that really, really works for her. She’s operating at the highest level. Part of it is she’s like a freak of nature in the best way possible.

But I don’t even know where I was going with that – Yeah, she – Oh yes! What she was eating during these runs is like all kinds of gross stuff, like the stations and they’ll have pancakes, or they’ll have – I don’t know, grilled cheese sandwiches, like weird stuff that you’re eating, like quesadillas, and she’s just like trying to get whatever down, and like ramen noodles and stuff like that. The she always has like a beer at the end or something. But also, whatever you’re eating, as long as it doesn’t mess you digestively, you’ll immediately burn that stuff, because that’s all just glucose. That’s just carbs.

But I would imagine that some of that stuff is going to be harder on your digestion, and your digestion is compromised when you’re running anyway, because all these blood flow is going to operate your body instead of your guts. So I guess long story short, that’s why goo still works, because it’s just this quick, easy sugar. Just goes directly into your bloodstream, right?


[00:45:30] AVH: Not nice. Yeah. One thing, you understand how it works. I’ve certainly had training runs where you’re 5 miles in and you’re like, “All right. I got like the short –”
[00:45:40] **AW**: That happened to me.

[00:45:41] **AVH**: That’s going to happen sometimes. Yeah, but I think like you said, the more you train and the more you figure out what plan works for you and you get it down to a science, I mean, that’s all you can really hope for.

What’s your favorite post-race celebration meal?

[00:45:56] **AW**: Pizza and wine.

[00:45:58] **AVH**: Well, now that you’re a New Yorker, you got to enjoy pizza.

[00:46:02] **AW**: Yeah. No. Really, it’s pizza and wine. Even though after a marathon, I can’t really eat. It takes a while, it’s because of the gels. I mean, if you think about it, I don’t even know how many carbs in 40 grams or something for a gel, and I had 5. The last one I remember here at New York, I was like, “Ugh!” I felt I needed it, but I was really close to –

[00:46:22] **AVH**: Yeah, it’s not nice.

[00:46:22] **AW**: It’s so much, but you need it. It’s helping.

[00:46:26] **AVH**: Do you still get the – What it’s called when you hit the wall? Do you still get that or you don’t get it?

[00:46:31] **AW**: Thanks to the gels I would say.

[00:46:33] **AVH**: Yeah. I feel like that is a thing that happens when you aren’t adequately prepared and fueling yourself, right?

[00:46:38] **AW**: Yeah, or some people are dehydrated also. But that’s a good part that I learned over the years, thanks to him and the whole diet journey we had. I think I’m very lucky to know how to fuel myself.
[00:46:56] AVH: How are you paying attention to your hydration on like race days?

[00:47:00] AW: Race days? I have a little bottle of Gatorade and water mix in my hands. It's like the size, it's very small, like the size of my hand. I carry that with me and I drink almost every mile like a little zip.

[00:47:15] AVH: But that's going to run out?

[00:47:15] AW: Yeah, but they have fueling stations.

[00:47:17] AVH: Okay. So you just have that thing in your hand at all times and you make sure you're remembering every mile, like have a sip, make sure you're –

[00:47:23] AW: Yeah. My friend who ran with me stopped for water, and whenever he stopped and got something, I had my zip. Then I had friends along the course who just switched the empty bottle to a new one, so I didn’t have to stop, which is great.

[00:47:35] AVH: Nice. Okay. Would you ever be interested in running anything longer than a marathon?

[00:47:40] AW: Yeah. I had talked about that with my friends this weekend. One of my friends is going to run the 2 Ocean Ultra Marathon, something like that, and that’s a 50-k.

[00:47:52] AVH: A little bit longer than – Yeah, because I think it’s 44 or something kilometers is a marathon. Yeah.

[00:47:56] AW: Yeah, 43 something. Yeah, I think I’m ready. I just have to find the right one. There’s one actually here in Central Park where it’s a 60k. They do 9 loops in Central Park.

[00:48:07] AVH: That’s torture. You want to do like an out and back, or like A to B or something.

[00:48:19] AVH: No. That is not pleasant. When I was living here for a full year and I was staying, I lived actually really close to Central Park, which is incredible for that one year, because I was running, and actually I was bodybuilding at the time, so I needed to get my cardio in so I was in the park all the time, but it was beautiful and it's a great loop to run, and it's also a great loop to bike, because there's some decent hills there in the north side. But doing it like more than once in a row –

[00:48:42] AW: The most I've done was 3 loops. It's a great training because of the hills. So sometimes if I had to do my long run, I just went there and did my loops. Also mentally, it's challenging, but 9 times, no.

[00:48:56] AVH: Are you running outside most of the time?

[00:49:00] AW: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[00:49:00] AVH: Okay. Year-round.

[00:49:02] AW: Yeah, unfortunately.

[00:49:03] AVH: Good for you. I do it too. Sometimes I'll be lazy and I'll be on the treadmill and I'm like, “What the hell am I doing?” I live in this mazing city. Yeah, it can be really annoying running outside in Manhattan. You got to kind of find your routes and find your time and all that stuff. But it's like such a waste to be like staring at a gym wall when you can be doing the people watching and like city viewing that you can do.

[00:49:29] AW: Yeah. Mentally it's, to me, really harder to run on a treadmill. I check the time all the time and I have to cover it with a towel so I don't see it. It's ridiculous. But some workouts, they do make sense on the treadmill. For example, last week I had a hill workout where I had to repeat like 15 hills. Where are am I supposed to do that? I'm not too close to Central Park, so there's really no hill by my house. So I did that on the treadmill. But other than that it's outside.
[00:49:58] AVH: Do you generally run in the mornings or the afternoons or in the morning before work?

[00:50:03] AW: In the morning. Yeah.

[00:50:03] AVH: Okay.

[00:50:05] AW: Now it's kind of hard because it's so dark right now.

[00:50:06] AVH: It's the worst.

[00:50:08] AW: I also have a puppy. So it's very unscheduled, so I have to, you know – but like I said, it's like 5AM.

[00:50:16] AVH: Yeah, that's rough. Where are your favorite places to run in the city?

[00:50:21] AW: I like the West Side Highway by the Hudson River. It's pretty flat and you have a long path. You can basically run all the way up to George Washington Bridge, and the park. I like the Central Park. It doesn't feel like New York, and you can go there at some hours of the day, like really early in the morning on the weekends.

[00:50:43] AVH: There's like nobody there. Yeah.

[00:50:44] AW: Beautiful.

[00:50:45] AVH: You can actually sense like a different freshness in the air. I swear around like spring time when all the leaves are coming back out, if you're walking along Central Park even, it's like you can – the smell, the fresh air is like hitting you in the face. It's amazing. Yeah.

What's next? What races are next?

[00:51:06] AVH: When is that?

[00:51:07] AW: In March. I’m going to Miami for the half, but that won’t be a goal race. I’ll just go for fun with my friends from Adidas. Then the New York City Half and then in June I’ll go to Brazil for the Rio Marathon. Then hopefully I’ll get into Berlin again. I think they’re sending that out this week.

[00:51:26] AVH: Right. Because some of them, they’re like lottery basically, right?

[00:51:30] AW: I’m not yet so fast to quality for those. But if you’re fast, then you can just sign up and you’re in.

[00:51:36] AVH: Okay. So if you hit a certain time, you can sign up and you’re automatically in. Otherwise, you have to fill out a lottery.


[00:51:42] AVH: Okay.


[00:51:46] AVH: All right. That’s plenty. That seems like plenty to me.

[00:51:49] AW: Yeah, a lot of work.

[00:51:49] AVH: Yeah. All right. Well, is there anything else that you want our listeners to know about running and anything?

[00:51:57] AW: I mean, my advice really for people who maybe start running is don’t be too hard on yourself sometimes, because like I said, I’ve been there and it’s not good for your body physically and also mentally. It takes a while to get to a certain point. Yeah, just be patient and trust your journey and you will get there eventually.

[00:52:27] AW: No.

[00:52:27] AVH: Yeah, you got to work for it.


[00:52:28] AVH: Yeah. I like that. Where can people find your blog?

[00:52:32] AW: My blog is runningbrina.com and Instagram is @runningbrina. Follow me there.

[00:52:38] AVH: Thank you very much. Like I said before when we’re talking on Instagram, maybe someday you can take me for a brisk two to three kilometer in the city. I mean, maybe I’ll work my way back up, but it’s been a while since I’ve done more than like a 5K.

[00:52:51] AW: Which marathons did you do?

[00:52:53] AVH: Actually, I did. So I did two. One was Mount Desert Island in Maine. So it was actually a very tough marathon. You might like it. It’s super small. There were like 400 people who ran it, but it was like elevation, like crazy, like it was a mountain. It sucked. It was in October. I was doing all my long runs like in August, September, and it was like summer. Then there was like snowflakes the day of the run in a mountain. It was so hard.

Anyway, Mount Desert Island. Check it out. Then the other one I did was in Prince Edward Island in Canada, which is beautiful. It’s like this beautiful little island province on the east coast that’s like red sand and it’s like basically sort of a beautiful kind of like small touristy spot and you kind of run the whole island essentially. It was beautiful, and it was a little bit easier. Not quite as hilly as I remember. But that’s kind of the cool thing about marathons too, and I guess any kind of sporting event, but really specifically marathons, because you’re traveling such a distance on your feet, is you get to see beautiful places. Again, why would you want to run 9
loops of Central Park when you can explore an entire town or province or city or whatever? I mean, it's beautiful.

[00:54:06] AW: In September, I went to the Dominican Republic with some of my friends who were born there. So they took us to Santo Domingo and we ran Santo Domingo Half. That's really what we did. We explored the city running. It was amazing. There were people dancing on the street and it was so cool.

[00:54:22] AVH: So cool. That is very cool.


[00:54:25] AVH: All right. Well, again, feel free. Take me anywhere, I'll run the first two, three – I'll run the first mile and a half with you, okay?

[00:54:32] AW: [inaudible 00:54:32].

[00:54:33] AVH: Yeah, exactly. All right. Thanks, Sabrina. I appreciate your time.

[00:54:36] AW: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:54:40] AVH: Okay, everybody. That's it for me. I hope you enjoyed it. I'd like to hear what your fitness or physical or health goals are for this year if you have any. If you don't, that's okay too. It doesn't have to be a marathon. It doesn't have to be anything intense. Maybe it means you’re working out less. Maybe it means that you’re doing more yoga, or meditation, or blocks, or relaxing, or playing with your kids, or I don’t know. But whatever it is, I’d like to hear it. Reach out to me on Instagram @themusclemaven. Let me know what your goals are. Let me know if you have any questions about the podcast or the show or paleo or anything at all, because I’m pretty responsive. I like to talk to people.
Keep me posted on what’s going on. I’d appreciate it, and stay tuned next week for a very eye-opening episode with a Montreal-based posture specialist. Her name is Annette Verpillot. She’s done a TED Talk. She’s been all over the place. She works on aligning your posture through exercise and working on things like your feet, your eyesight, your jaw and mouth, and your breathing. All of these things that you would never necessarily assume have anything to do with your posture. But the work that she does helps with increasing strength, decreasing pain, increasing overall mobility and just improved quality of life. It’s pretty incredible, and I learned a lot.

There is obviously a lot more to posture than just standing up straight, a lot more. It’s way more complicated as pretty much everything is when it has to do with the human body. But we’re going to discuss things like what good posture even means and the nuances to aligning it, and the incredible effects that it has on the nervous system, your neurochemistry, your endocrine function, your mood, overall body function, everything. It’s a super, super information-packed episode. So make sure you’re subscribed to the podcast so you don’t miss it. You might want to take notes on this one. There are a lot. So I hope you join me, and that’s it.

Thanks for spending your time with me and have a great week.

[OUTRO]

[00:56:39] AVH: The intro music for Paleo Magazine Radio is a song called Stronger performed by Alter Ego and I hope you love it.

[END]