

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 72: Paul Levesque

Show notes and links at tim.blog/podcast

Tim Ferriss: Why, good morning, you sexy beast. Would you like me to make some breakfast? Oh. I'm sorry. I was having a flashback there. Folks, this is Tim Ferriss.

This is an addendum, an urgent update recorded after this episode was completed. Because I was going through a roster of all of the most amazing things I've been able to experience in my life, and at the top of the list was: floating at zero gravity, experiencing weightlessness in a shuttle and being able to, say, chase after globules of water floating in mid-air or chase Skittles that you've tossed into the air – it's floating right in front of your face, say five feet away. Or skreeing around all the way around the perimeter of the shuttle like a hamster in a hamster wheel, if you were inverted, in a way. It's really amazing.

And I loved it so much that I decided to give away a flight. So I am giving away a flight at zero gravity. And you can get it. There's no cost involved. But it's only possible this week – that is, the week of Monday, April 20th. So jump on this right now. I would suggest that you pause this and check it out. Just go to fourhourworkweek.com/zero. That's fourhourworkweek all spelled out: F-O-U-R-H-O-U-R, etc., forward slash zero – Z-E-R-O. So check it out. And now, back to your regular programming.

This episode is brought to you by LSTN headphones, which are gorgeous and produce incwedible – “incwedible” –

Tim Ferriss: This episode is brought to you by LSTN headphones. LSTN headphones are gorgeous, made out of real, exotic, reclaimed wood. But they are also doing good in the world. Proceeds from each purchase help someone to hear for the first time, through the Starkey Hearing Foundation. I've been using LSTN headphones since they came out, partially because the founders started the company after reading *The 4-Hour Workweek*. And now they're available in Nordstrom and all over the place. They're super high quality.

And if you wanna see the headphones that I travel with, that I love, both in-ear and out-of-ear – so kind of big ole old school

headphones – then you can go to lsthheadphones.com/tim. That's L-S-T-Nheadphones.com/tim. You will also get a \$50.00 – that's right – \$50.00 discount. That's a big, whopping 5-0, folks. So go to lsthheadphones.com/tim, L-S-T-Nheadphones.com/tim.

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I have used them for years, including to grab cover concepts for *The 4-Hour Body*, which went on to become No. 1 New York Times, and it really was a springboard for everything. So, go to 99designs.com/tim, and you can also get two things: a \$99.00 upgrade and, must for the month of April, just for you guys, you can get an additional \$30.00 off. And that is a total savings of \$129.00. So check out 99designs.com/tim.

Well hello, ladies and gentlemen. This is Tim Ferriss, and welcome to another episode of The Tim Ferriss Show. I am drinking tea with coconut oil in it because I am in ketosis. So my brain is running like Speedy Gonzalez on some type of biochemical advantage. But that's not what I'm here to talk about.

I am here to do what I do every episode, and that is: deconstruct world-class performers to find the tools, tricks, routines, habits, and so on that you can use – whether those people are billionaire investors like, for instance, Peter Thiel, who was the first money into Facebook, also cofounder of PayPal and Palantir, or celebrities and actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, tech icons like Matt Mullenweg behind WordPress and WordPress.com, and so on and so forth. Musicians – we've got everybody.

And I have wanted to interview a professional wrestler for a very long time now – after seeing the movie, *The Wrestler*, but also having wrestled myself, and having watched WWE, and WWF before that, and then the rise of MMA.

And I managed to get ahold of a fantastic performer and incredible athlete, Triple H. So: Triple H, who is a 13 time world champion in the WWE. But that is not all. He's also the executive vice president of Talent, Live Events, & Creative at the WWE. And we talk about just about everything in this episode.

His real name is Paul Levesque, and we dig into the questions of misconceptions related to both Triple H, his stage name – his stage persona, and WWE; the important lessons he learned while training with a wrestler named Killer Kowalski, including getting hit in the back of the head with a phone book in a garbage bag; ouch. And we get into his longevity: how he avoids, and also repairs, injuries; pre-game rituals, including input from a trainer named Joe DeFranco, of course his colleague-in-arms, The Undertaker, and even Floyd Mayweather. And who does he model? How does he view parenting? He has a bunch of daughters.

And it goes on and on. We really dig deep. It turned out better than I could have expected. And I expected it to be good. So I hope you really enjoy this. Of course, all show notes can be found at fourhourworkweek.com/podcast, all spelled out. And please enjoy my conversation with the one and only Triple H, Paul Levesque.

Paul, welcome to the show.

Paul Levesque: Thank you very much, man. It's an honor to be here.

Tim Ferriss: I am so excited for this. You are a massive human being.

Paul Levesque: It's a job requirement, kind of.

Tim Ferriss: It does seem to be a job requirement. And you have worn a lot of hats, and have had a lot of different titles, a lot of different jobs. When someone asks you, "What do you do?" if they don't recognize you, how do you answer that question?

Paul Levesque: It's funny now because I'm kind of in this weird kind of combo twilight zone of the last bits of my in-ring wrestling career. Even when I did it then, I used to say I was an entertainer. Because people – the WWE's a weird thing. It's like one of those things: if you not into it, no explanation can explain it to you to make you like it. And if you are into it, there's no explanation necessary. It just is what it is. And so to sometimes say, "Oh, WWE," they would go like, "Oh...the wrestling?" You know? And it just had a weird connotation to it. When you say, "Entertainer," "Oh, what kind?" "Oh, WWE." It just took on a different meaning –

Tim Ferriss: Sure.

Paul Levesque: – to people that don't understand what we do. So I always went with that. Right now, it's kind of a combo. We have a saying that we use at WWE, which is, "Our job is to put smiles on people's faces." And it's kind of the overall thing of what we do. But it's been 90 percent of my day as an executive. So, there you go.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. We are gonna also dig into that and rewind the clock and look at the trajectory. But: what are misconceptions that people have about you, or Triple H, or WWE?

Paul Levesque: I think they don't – they just see what they see on TV. The misconception, for me, is that I'm very much what you see on television, or I'm this character. They see the simplistic things of what we do. It's funny: even if you're this huge fan of the WWE, they get so upset over things like: "Why would this guy beat that guy? Just: guh!" It's one of the terms right now: "He buried him." You know? It's a show.

And what they don't get about our show is: we are like this never-ending – you can compare it to whatever you want: comic book, soap opera, TV drama, movie. But it never ends. So there's always another chapter. And they get so upset in the moment of not liking maybe the end of the chapter that they're on. But there's another chapter. It starts tomorrow. It actually started right now when this one ended. But they don't get that, and they can't wait for that. And they don't understand all the complexities that go on behind the scenes.

So that's probably the biggest misconception – is that the WWE is just a bunch of guys, at its simplest form, that just go to the ring in their underwear and pretend to fight with each other. But when you really break it down, it's a massive, global business.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, there's a lot behind it.

Paul Levesque: Oh my God, it's huge.

Tim Ferriss: And I've been so impressed by it for so long. Not the least of which – and we'll certainly explore the physical and mental stamina: how many matches would you say you have had, total, to date, televised or otherwise?

Paul Levesque: Thousands. You know, if you break it down simplistically – and math is not my strong suit – but I started wrestling I think in '93-ish. Just training – '92, '93, training.

Tim Ferriss: Was this in in New Hampshire?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. In New Hampshire I trained with a guy named Killer Kowalski, an old –

Tim Ferriss: Who my mom loves, by the way.

Paul Levesque: Oh really? Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: So I wanted to dig into that.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. He was one of the first guys to become kinda like globally known. And I started training with him. He had a school, if you wanna call it that. It was like a little run-down mill building with a boxing ring in it, in Malden, Massachusetts. And I started training with him there. So if you break it down from there to today, 20-plus years – and then once I made it to the WWE, which was '95, even if you just wanna look at it from there and just say 20 years, 20 years I probably, for a lot of those years, wrestled 250, 280 days a year. Sometimes on the weekends we did double shots. So we'd wrestle a matinee in the afternoon and then a night show. So it's a lot.

Tim Ferriss: A lotta mileage.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. It's a lotta mileage.

Tim Ferriss: What were the most –

Paul Levesque: That's the thing we always say: "It's not the years, it's the miles." You know?

Tim Ferriss: Figuratively and literally.

Paul Levesque: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: And it's a hell of lot of travel. But before I get to asking about travel and all these different training aspects, what were the most important lessons you learned while training with Killer Kowalski?

Paul Levesque: It's funny. A lot of the things – I think, as in life, he taught me a lotta things that I didn't know he was teaching me at the time. He would tell me a lotta things and I would be like "Ugh," because he's just –

Tim Ferriss: The Mr. Miyagi approach?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. You know, you have this – it would've worked very well in today's millennial age. But his theory of telling you you did something wrong was hitting you in the back of the head with a phone book that was in like a shopping bag.

Tim Ferriss: Oh my God.

Paul Levesque: But yeah. He would just teach all the – he wouldn't say a whole lot, and then all of a sudden he'd come in and he would say, "You need to be spectacular. Make everybody look at you, no one else." And then he would just walk away. And then you would be like, "What does that mean?" You kinda had to figure it out. Now there's a lotta things that he said to me then that I find myself telling the young guys now. In a different way, but it's the same lessons, kind of, you know –

Tim Ferriss: Are there any examples that come to mind?

Paul Levesque: Well, just in how to be spectacular. But also how to break things down and to just look at what you do like – never be satisfied with what you do. If you don't do something well, don't do it. Unless you wanna spend the time to improve that. Like still, to this day, I see a lotta guys do stuff in the ring that I'm like, "He doesn't do that well, but he does it all the time." You shouldn't do that.

I have things that I don't do well in the ring. Just don't. That's just –

Tim Ferriss: What would be an example?

Paul Levesque: For example, there's this one thing that guys take where they go through the top and middle turnbuckle and hit the post from the inside, hit it with their shoulder. I just – it's one of those mental block things for me. Like I can't seem to navigate going between the two turnbuckles and getting the thing. Like I always get stuck somehow. Or I've tried to do it before and it's just one of those things – doesn't work out for me. So I never do it. And if – guys will grab me in the ring over the years and say, "Take the post." And I'll just: "Nope. I'm not" – you know what I mean? Because I don't –

Tim Ferriss: It's slight correction.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. I just don't do that well. I'm not gonna do it. And I think there's little things like that that guys don't analyze what they do.

They do what they do, and then they say, “Oh, that was really good in the overall picture of things. It was really good. People really liked it.” It was, but there were some things in there that weren’t really good.

Tim Ferriss: So it averaged out well, but there were things they should’ve omitted.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. And, to me, I don’t know – I’ve always been the kinda guy: if you’re doing it, why wasn’t everything what you wanted it to be in there? There shouldn’t be wasted movement. There shouldn’t be things that aren’t what you want them to be. I don’t wanna do something just to get to the next thing, you know?

Tim Ferriss: No, I do. And what are you particularly good at in that environment? What are the strengths that you focused on?

Paul Levesque: For me, it was never about individual moves. And I think as the business – maybe some guys now look at that and they think differently because they might look at my style and say I was never an over-the-top spectacular guy. But I wasn’t supposed to be. I was usually the bad guy. So I wanted to be that constant, and let the other guy be spectacular around me. And, for me, it was never about the spectacular moves. It was about the drama of the match. And I look at what we do as: we’re more like Rocky, the movie, than we are legitimate boxing.

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Paul Levesque: It’s about the story that you tell. So if the story is really good going in and you care about the two characters and then you make that emotional story play out through those two characters nonverbally in the ring, that’s the magic of what we do. It doesn’t matter if – yeah, it makes the highlight reel: “Oh my God, he did this one spectacular move. It was crazy. I don’t know how he made it through that” or whatever. It’s not really about that. Because tomorrow there’ll be another guy can do that move better than you just did it. And it’ll be even more spectacular. Or he’ll come up with another way to do it that’s even crazier.

Tim Ferriss: Well you mentioned Rocky, right? It’s about the story arc, not just a handful of really good lines of dialogue.

Paul Levesque: Exactly. Yeah. And that’s the thing of it. It’s one of the things that works. We have the WWE network. It’s a lot of old content. People will go back and they’ll watch WrestleMania I over and

over again, and how great it is. Or WrestleMania III and all these things. It's because it's a emotional story. If it was just about the moves, it wouldn't be so impactful to you still. The emotional story – that's why people will go back and watch the movie, Rocky, over and over again. Because it's a great story.

They very rarely go back and watch – you know, there's exceptions: Mohammed Ali and Foreman or something, moments in time. But the average person, unless they're a boxing connoisseur, doesn't go back and watch boxing over and over again.

Tim Ferriss: No. And you know what's fascinating about the examples you just gave, whether it's Ali/Frazier or whatever – those, in real life, ended up being like story arcs because you would have this back-and-forth and this drama, and the Thrilla in Manila. And there were all the elements of sort of the monomyth or the –

Paul Levesque: And even when you go back and usually watch those fights, you go back and you watch them in a show that now chronicles the story of –

Tim Ferriss: That ties them together.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. It chronicles the story of those epic contests. And that's the reality of the story. I say it all the time: if you know who's in the ring fighting, you'll tune in and you'll watch. To just watch two guys fight for no apparent reason – it's not that interesting. Unless you're a connoisseur of what they're doing –

Tim Ferriss: Of the craft.

Paul Levesque: If you're watching [inaudible] and you're a big mixed martial arts fan, or all those things – and there's a lot of those. But they're very into what's going on scientifically, and –

Tim Ferriss: Technical –

Paul Levesque: – the chess game, the technical chess came that's going on. But that's not the general public. To hit the general public, they need to know something about the two guys and why they're fighting.

Tim Ferriss: Right. The fighting. Now, at your peak point in your on-stage wrestling career, you mentioned two hundred and something – like 250 to 300 days of the year, you were probably travelling? Something like that?

Paul Levesque: Travelling, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: What were some of the keys to your longevity? Being able to maintain that? And I know we have a common connection in Joe DeFranco.

Paul Levesque: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: And he's mentioned that you very rarely, if ever, miss training days.

Paul Levesque: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: And maybe you could speak to that. But even if that means coming in at 2:00, 3:00 in the morning to train. What have been some of the keys or practices that have allowed you to sustain that type of torturous schedule?

Paul Levesque: I think – you speak a lot, in your podcast and in your books and everything, about routines, and having things that you do. And I'm very big in that way. And I like to have my life kind of – when it gets chaotic, it bothers me. Which sounds silly, because what we do is chaotic at all times. My day varies, and people talk about: when you do live TV – like Monday Night Raw, for us – we work on that show and that isn't done until – like sometimes guys are walking out the curtain and somebody's shouting a change to them as they're walking through the curtain. So the chaos is there.

But having that consistent thing – so, for me: I had very distinct things like: if I was – in the beginning there wasn't as much supplements and it was a little bit more difficult. But as supplements became more available, I would – I'm big on the preparation part. So if I was gonna get on a plane to fly to Japan, I would take either containers or later, when they were there, I would make my own protein shakes. I'd put the two scoops of protein in the thing, I'd put some oil in there, I'd put whatever I needed, I'd put the top on it – no liquid in there – and I'd stick it inside my carryon bag.

And I would time it in my head so I'm on the flight for – “It's a 16 hour flight. I need to eat every three hours. I'm not gonna count on the food on the plane. That would just be bonus food. So I have a shake for every three hours. And I'd set my watch to go off every three hours: “Oh, time to eat.” And I'd get a shake out, get

water, drink my shake, put it in, go back to sleep. Whatever I needed to do.

When I landed, I would check into the hotel. Second we checked in, I'd ask them: "Is the gym open? Can I go train?" Even if it was to get on a bike and ride for 15 minutes, reset that – I learned early that it seemed to me: any time I did that, I didn't get jet lag. Any time I did that, I seemed to – we use wrestling terms like: "I'd kick out faster." So while everybody else would be at the building dragging that day, I'd be like, "I feel great. I don't feel so bad." Getting your blood flowing, resetting your clock.

If we were in Australia, I would always – that last day there, I would force myself to stay up. Because then I could sleep the whole way home, and by the time I landed, I'm landing in the morning and it's perfect. I'm just waking up. And I'm great. And I'd do the same thing: I'd land, I'd try to find a gym, whether at a hotel or something, ride a bike, reset my clock, do the deal, you know? So those routines and regimented stuff – and same with my training.

When new guys would start a lot on the road, like internationally when we're all traveling together, it's hard when you go overseas. You're on a bus. There's a gym set up for you, but they don't know how – like, "How do I get to the gym? I'm not sure. Am I supposed to go downstairs, get on a bus? I don't know." The guys would always come to me and say, "Hey, we've always heard that you go to the gym every day. Can I go with you?" I'd say, "Yeah. Meet downstairs." A bunch of guys would come down. We'd all go to the gym together. Because I would go every day. I didn't like missing it. To me, it was that regimented thing.

And I can look back on my career and say, "I think part of that regimented stuff is why I was able to maintain it, or maintain that schedule." Because I was one of the guys, also, that really, truly believed in that: when you make it, the job gets harder. It's not the other way around. You don't make it and then go, "Okay, now I can cruise. Because now I'm the guy, and now that means I can say, 'No.' And I can not do these things." I felt the opposite. When you get there, now it's your responsibility to not say, "No."

So I've had times where I've worked 64 straight days. And everybody else went home; I went on a media tour. Everybody else went back home; I went to something else. I did that for years. And that regimented – having those distinct patterns, so to speak, I think helped keep that.

Tim Ferriss: I think it helps preserve your bandwidth, also, for making decisions about other things. So that you don't have to decide each morning, or each day, what all the elements of your routine are gonna look like.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. It's funny. I heard you talk – just recently I listened to your podcast, in my research for this. Because I've read your books, but hearing somebody speak is different than what you put in your mind of how they speak. So I wanted to –

Tim Ferriss: You're like, "God, that guy sounds a lot dumber on audio."

Paul Levesque: No, no. But you put something in your head and then get there, go, "That is not what I expected at all." So I listened to a few of your podcasts –

Tim Ferriss: I sounded more like Barry Manilow?

Paul Levesque: Yes. Much. You spoke – now I forgot what I was talking about.

Tim Ferriss: That was bad Tim Ferriss etiquette on my part.

Paul Levesque: No.

Tim Ferriss: We were talking about routines.

Paul Levesque: It's bad memory on my part, is what it is. Routines – oh, I know what I was gonna say. Yeah: I believe that training is almost like a meditation.

Tim Ferriss: Totally agree.

Paul Levesque: Like I heard Anthony Robbins say he didn't meditate because he didn't like shutting off. He's the opposite: he wants to just keep going. But I also believe you need to reboot your brain, because your brain will get stuck in – it's like when you go to sleep and you can't stop thinking about something you got going on at work, and you can't get it out. And in the morning you realize it was actually gibberish that was in your brain going on?

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Paul Levesque: I think training, when you do it well, if you're into it, you can't focus – you can't be in the middle of trying to do a heavy set of something and be thinking about another project. You have to be

in that moment, and it allows you to reboot, which I kind of believe is what meditation and all that stuff is anyways. It's just a reset button for a second that just allows you to go like, "Okay. Start over. Clean the plate, and now let's do this again." And that's really, to me, what training is.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely. Digging a little bit more on the routines: for instance, in the last – let's just say as you've gotten older, in the last handful of years, what is your pre-game ritual, if you have one? Before you're gonna go out and compete and perform?

Paul Levesque: So that just became a necessity of age. I never –

Tim Ferriss: And just for people listening, if you don't mind me asking: how old are you at the moment?

Paul Levesque: 45. But so, for years, when I was doing all that stuff with wrestling, wrestling all those dates and everything – it's funny, because some of the younger guys would joke with me about it, like, "You're the old school guy." I would literally be sitting in the chair up at – we call it "Gorilla position," right before you walk out the curtain. It's named after an old wrestler, Gorilla Monsoon. But I would just be sitting in a chair, my music would hit, I'd get up and go to the ring. And they would say, "You don't warm up at all." I'd say, "A walk to the ring is good. Take a good warmup, you know? I'll start slow. It'll be fine."

Now I have to stretch and warm up. And Joe DeFranco – you mentioned – my strength and conditioning guy – one of the things when – I'm really bad with years and dates, but: four years ago, as my career was kinda winding down but I was still wrestling fairly regularly, I had had this problem. I thought it was a neck injury. And really having all this problem with my neck and my shoulder. And I got into a position with the company where I needed to go make a couple of movies for them. Long story, but I went to go make two movies. I ended up taking about a month off from the ring to go make these two movies and then was supposed to come back.

While I was making the movies, one day I went to the gym to train, and it had gotten to a point where I couldn't raise my left arm up over my shoulder, and my neck was really bad. And I'd been going to see our team physician – the guy that runs our medical. And I'd been getting stuck with needles and dye and MRIs and things. And they kept saying, "It looks great. We don't see – there's clearly something nerve going on here, but we don't know

what it is.” And they kept doing all this stuff. And went to the gym one day and tore my bicep. And it didn’t hurt at all. It like snapped, I looked down and I had the big gap in my arm. I was just –

Tim Ferriss: God.

Paul Levesque: – mad more than anything. I was like, “Ugh. I can’t believe that.”

Tim Ferriss: It just rolled up like a venetian blind.

Paul Levesque: No. It tore at the top, so it just plopped down –

Tim Ferriss: Oh god.

Paul Levesque: – and made this divot there, right? And I had headphones on, and I heard it, and I looked down and there was this divot. I was like, “Son of a bitch. I can’t believe I just tore my bicep.” So I’m mad. I put my weights down. And literally, I was done training. I was just gonna do a couple extra sets of biceps or whatever. And I called the guy to come back and get me. And as I went to go outside – I was sweating and now I’m pissed, so I’m just gonna leave – and I go to put my sweatshirt on, and as I did, I put my sweatshirt – threw my arm up over my head to put my sweatshirt on and realized: “Wait a minute. I can move my arm all the way around my head like that. I couldn’t do that” –

Tim Ferriss: Your shoulder mobility got back.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. It was like everything came back. And: “Hey, wait. My neck doesn’t hurt.” It was all from this bicep. And I had to get surgery and the whole thing. But it got me to a point in my head like: “I’m getting older. I’m falling apart a little bit. I have to start – maybe I should think about trying to train like an athlete instead of just being a bodybuilder and looking good or whatever.”

So I’m not a guy that just calls a local gym. I have to then dig into it. So I start researching trainers and everything. And, ironically, I end up probably where you did in your quest to do – when you did 4-Hour Body, which is you start researching all these guys that become the best at what they do. And I come across Joe DeFranco. It keeps coming back up: Joe DeFranco. So then I call Joe DeFranco out of the blue one day, and just say – I was actually – because he was in Jersey and I was in Connecticut, and I was thinking maybe he could recommend me to somebody.

And he said, “Can I come and meet with you? I’d like to meet with you just so I can analyze the thing.” I still had my arm in a sling and everything. And just finished making the movies. I didn’t have the surgery until after I finished making the movies. And he came and, after we met, he’s like, “You seem like a really great guy. I’d like to take a stab at doing this with you. I’ll drive up here. I’m willing to do it and drive up.” And this is the thing: he’s awesome.

Tim Ferriss: He’s a great guy. And for people who aren’t familiar, he’s very well-known for a lot of reasons. But does a lot of work with football athletes training for the NFL Combine. And that’s how he ended up – the chapters in *The 4-Hour Body* where I showed how un-athletic I am, but how much Joe could improve my performance, attempting to simulate the Combine for a handful of chapters. But please continue. I just wanted to give some context for people.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. Thank you.

Tim Ferriss: Great guy.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. And just wealth of knowledge. Incredibly smart. And he said to me, “So this’ll be a difficult transition for you. Because your mindset is totally different.” I’d never been with a strength and conditioning guy. Everything I learned in the gym was from body builders or power lifters. I just went to the gym and trained with guys and learned everything I could. But I was a sponge for it, and Arnold was my hero. And just was a sponge for all that stuff. But that’s how I learned it. So strength and conditioning and the whole stretching and mobility was totally foreign to me. And he said, “This is gonna be a tough thing for you. We’ll see if you can do it. Because tough with old dogs, new tricks.”

And I just went to him and I said, “Dude, I will tell you this: I’m all in. Tell me what to do. I’ll go do it.” But it changed my life. It changed my life athletically: I went from a guy gimping going up stairs because my knees were killing me – I’ve torn both my quads and my knees were really bad and all that. I have zero knee pain now. I’m as strong as I’ve ever been. I don’t have physical issues. But it’s because of that type of training and Joe.

And he was one of the guys that got me: “When you do wrestle, here’s what we’re gonna do. We’re gonna get you in this kinda shape, and then here’s gonna be your pre-match ritual of your

stretching and your mobility. We're gonna light your body up, get your nerves kicking and firing. And then you're gonna go." And that's what I do now, and it works out a whole lot better.

Tim Ferriss: What are – as opposed to going from the gorilla position straight out to the ring – and what I'll provide for folks – obviously lots of links to everything that you're up to. But also I'll ping Joe and get some links to exercises and some videos. What does that look like now? What are some of the exercises or the sequence?

Paul Levesque: It's a lot of mobility stuff: Cossack squats –

Tim Ferriss: Is that a weighted Cossack squat, or is it – ?

Paul Levesque: No. Well, it depends. But usually I don't weight if I'm getting ready to go for a match. But he'll have me do Cossack squats into maybe just a squat but when I come down I'm pushing my knees out to the side to stretch my groin out, into some type of eccentric explosive pushup, but just getting things to fire my nervous system, wake my nervous system up, but then also just open my joints up a little bit and just warm my body up.

But it's never anything like – I see guys running up and down hallways and doing all these things to get a sweat going. I'm never at that point. But when I'm done, I always feel alive. As opposed to just kind of physically shut down but mentally aware because I'm about to go to the ring. So no matter how many years you've been doing this, you're still nervous and freaking out. And to then have your body just kick in a wake up. But when you're there, you know what I mean? And that's really what it is. He varies it, but it's a little series of exercises. Just makes me go: pu!

Tim Ferriss: How long does it typically take?

Paul Levesque: Five, ten minutes.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, it's nice, short and sweet.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. I just go right from one thing to the other. It's –

Tim Ferriss: Awesome.

Paul Levesque: – a good little deal, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: I'll ping Joe. So people, you can find that at the show notes at fourhourblog.com. The fear factor: what you guys do is – can be very dangerous. I mean, there are risks involved.

Paul Levesque: Sure.

Tim Ferriss: When you're nervous or have been nervous, what does your inner dialogue sound like, when you're preparing yourself to go out? When you've been most nervous? What are you saying to yourself?

Paul Levesque: So it's changed over the years. I used get really intense and really – almost like that same level of intensity if you were gonna go for a personal record squat or something where you just get in that zone of intensity and just: nothing else is around you and you're in your own little world and just on fire, ready to tear through this thing. And that – when I was younger – that used to be the thing. For me, now, it's much more of an inner dialogue of: "You have been doing this for 20 years. You know how to do this. Relax. And this is fun."

And somewhere there's that inner dialogue in me saying, "Could be the last time you do this. Enjoy it." Undertaker and I had a conversation a couple years ago about this. It's a little bit of: "You can still do this" and calming yourself down. But at the same point in time, "Don't forget to enjoy this moment when you're out there. Because you might not get another one. You don't know." And injuries do happen, especially as you get older. And you can't think about it once you're out there.

And that's the thing for me: it's always been this emotional and nerve and music hits, and the second I walk out, it's gone. Like I don't have any of it. When I'm in the ring, waiting for the other guy or whatever, I don't have any of it.

And it's an interesting thing to me that – I'm friends with Floyd Mayweather.

Tim Ferriss: Incredible athlete.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. And I was walking him to the ring one time, I think when he fought Marquez. And we got there early and his guys came and got me. And I wanted to watch some of the Undercard. And then they came and got me and they said, "You know, Floyd just wanted to say hi before he starts getting ready and stuff, chat with you for a few minutes." So Steph and I went backstage – my wife.

And we get in his locker room and he's laying down on the couch watching basketball game. And we come in and say hello and all that. And he's like, "Hi, have a seat." We're talking a little bit. But I'm trying to be ultra-respectful of him. He's about to go in this massive fight.

And the second there's a lull in the conversation, I'm like, "All right, man. We're gonna get outta your hair and head back. And we'll come back here when it's time for us to get ready for your deal." And he's like, "Man, you don't gotta take off. You can sit down. I'm enjoying the conversation." And he's like completely relaxed. So another lull in the conversation, I go, "We're gonna run, Floyd. I don't wanna be in your way."

And he goes, "Hunter, I'm telling you, I'm just chilling, watching the game." And I said, "You're not wound up about this at all?" And he goes, "Why would I be wound up? I'm either ready or I'm not. Worrying about it right now ain't gonna change a damn thing. Right? Whatever's gonna happen's gonna happen. So I've either done everything I can to be ready for this, or I'm not."

It was a fair point. I sat back down. We watched the game for a little more.

Tim Ferriss: You're like, "All right, want a beer?"

Paul Levesque: He just is very calm and relaxed.

Tim Ferriss: That's amazing.

Paul Levesque: And I think when you feel in your mind that you're ready, you're ready. And you're gonna have those nerves, but you know it's there.

Tim Ferriss: When you were coming up – let's just say when you had hit your stride somewhat, so you're starting to make the ascent through the ranks and really become popular – when you thought of the word "successful," who was the person in your head at that time?

Paul Levesque: I don't know. It's hard to say. Because I looked at – inside of our business, there were guys, like, for me, my favorite performer character was Ric Flair. Just kinda felt like overall he had the best package of everything to offer. You know, there were guys that were great showmen, very popular, or guys that were great at one thing. He had kinda the combo of: great in-ring performer and made everybody look good, this great character, all these things.

Inside the wrestling business, that was a component of success for me: just that level of performer, the way he handled himself in the ring.

I always wanted to be the in-ring kind of general and understand. And it's one of the things I prided myself on at the peak of my career, was: if there were six people involved in something, I could tell you at any given time, if I closed my eyes in the ring, where they all were. No matter how much they were moving around and what they were doing, I knew where they were, I knew what they had in their hands, I knew – just on glimpses as I was moving around the ring.

I always felt like it was my job – if something was gonna screw up, that was my fault. It wasn't because he didn't know what was coming. It was because I didn't control that. So I always felt like the control was mine to take, because it was what I could count on. I couldn't rely on: this might get screwed up because maybe there's a confusion between those two guys over there who're supposed to do their thing. So I always took it on me to make sure I was there to tell them, "This is coming up. Be ready. Here we go. Get the chair," whatever. Flair was very good at that. So that was, for me, from that point of view, was a success component.

But there was a lot of things that I looked for. Wrestling didn't define me as far as what I saw was successful. I looked at my father-in-law, now Vince. I looked at that as a guy that saw a business that was one thing, but had a vision of it being something else. He saw this little territory business and thought, "This should be one global brand that everybody watches, because the world's getting smaller. Cable is taking over." So he had this vision and then he just kinda set out doing it.

I looked at Arnold. I remember, as a kid, reading *Education of a Body Builder* and very structured, methodical set of: "Here's what I wanna do, here's what I wanna be, and here's how I'm gonna get there." Those kind of things and those kind of people were success models for me. Arnold was that in the structure. I just said it to him a few weeks ago. I say this in interviews a lot: that gym taught me everything I needed to know for life. I walked in a gym at 14 and I fell in love with it. I fell in love with the end result look, right? Always in awe of these big, powerful, impressive guys.

I think it's part of what I dug about wrestling. I enjoyed the physical and all that stuff of it. And fell in love with that really,

wholly. That's probably what led me to the gym at first. But just the discipline of it. And the going to the gym – when I say it's like life: the more you put in, the more you get out. The harder you work, the better the results. If you're willing to prepare, to sacrifice – and it's not just about to the gym, lifting weights, and then going out and goofing off the rest of the time. It's your life. So if you discipline your diet, if you discipline your rest, if you don't go to the party with your friends, if you don't do all these things, your results follow suit.

I just got inducted into the International Sports Hall of Fame – Arnold's International Sports Hall of Fame.

Tim Ferriss: Congratulations.

Paul Levesque: Thank you. But I bring it up because Evander Holyfield was there. And he told this story. And I've never heard it said this way before. And I'm sorry, Evander, but I'm gonna steal this. He told me that – he was giving his speech and he said that his coach at one point in time told him, like his very first day, he said, "You could be the next Mohammed Ali." And he said, "Do you wanna do that?" And he said he had to ask his mom. And then he went back home and he came back and he said, "I wanna do that." And he said, "Okay. Is that a dream, or a goal? Because there's a difference."

I'd never heard it said that way, but it struck to me. So much so that I've said it to my kid now: "Is that a dream, or a goal? Because a dream is something you fantasize about that probably will never happen. A goal is something you set a plan and work towards and achieve. Is that a dream or a goal?" I kind of always looked at my stuff that way. So the people that were successful models to me were people that had structured goals and then put a plan in place to get to those things. And I think that's what impressed me about Arnold. It's what impressed me about my father-in-law. To this day, he's still very much a: "Here's the goal. Now here's how I'm gonna get there."

Tim Ferriss: Energizer bunny. That's an amazing man. You guys seem like peas in a pod from a stamina and endurance standpoint.

Paul Levesque: You know, and I've heard you say it before: when you have that goal in mind, now it's not, "Ugh, I gotta do this thing to get that done." You can't wait to do that thing to get that done, because it's gonna get you closer to your goal.

Tim Ferriss: Right. Well, it's the compass that allows you to find order in the chaos too.

Paul Levesque: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Parenting – I don't yet have kids. That I know of. At some point I would love to have a family. How do you think about being a father? What type of father do you want to be? What do you think is important in that role?

Paul Levesque: That's a tough one. I have three girls: an eight, a six, and a four.

Tim Ferriss: Very well-spaced.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. And that's it. We're done. It's hard. The pressure, as a parent – hopefully if everybody takes the job seriously, you're giving them the examples of how they're gonna live their life. Kids don't do what you say. They do what they see. So how you live your life is their example. I've heard it said, and I believe this: the way I treat their mother and the way I treat them is what they're gonna look for in a significant other. You gotta think, "So, what do I want them to have in their life? Holy cow. Now I gotta do all that stuff." It's a lot. And then you add in all the other things of life. It's a very difficult challenge. But you wanna teach them right from wrong. You wanna give them a path and a direction, but all at the same point in time, you learn as much from your failures as you do from your successes, so you can't give them everything. You wanna help them so bad. Like I'm watching you make a mistake and I wanna help you, but go ahead and make the mistake, because you gotta learn from that mistake, you know what I mean?

And it's tough to do. But you have to – and there's no manual. That's the hard thing about kids. There's no manual that comes with it. And you're just doing the best you can. I remember when we got our first one home, the hospital put it in the car seat and you take the thing home and then we walked in the door and we put it on the step and we were like, "What do we do now?" We just stood there looking at it – her for a little bit like, "What do we do?" Eventually she cried and we had to feed her and whatever. But you don't know what to do. It's like, "We have a kid. Holy cow."

Tim Ferriss: You figure it out as you go.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. Luckily I like, "I gotta go on the road."

Tim Ferriss: The aspect of routines that we touched on earlier, I'd love to bring back into focus for a second, specifically morning routines. What does the first 60 minutes of your day look like? And I'll probably ask a bunch of really irritating and nitpicky questions because that's how I am. But when do you wake up? What does the first 60 to 90 minutes of your day look like?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. So I wish I had a really cool example of that. Like Anthony Robbins –

Tim Ferriss: “I wake up, I go in a Cryochamber.”

Paul Levesque: “I've got the Cryochamber.” He's got this elaborate ritual of mind-altering spiritual jumping in a hot tank and a cold tank and a – mine involves my kids waking up at an ungodly hour after I – you know, we work under the premise of – my wife and I – and, to me, she gets this even more than I do because she's got all the roles and all the stuff and then she's Mom.

And when you're the dad, it's a big responsibility but the mom – if anything happens, if they wake up, they go to her first. When the kids wake up in the middle of the night, unless they're scared – they might call Dad if they're scared, but usually it's Mom because they just – Mom's more the comforter, right? So it's all those things. So that's a even harder job.

But we train late at night. We try to get home every night no matter what to spend a little bit of time with them and put them down. And read them a book, whatever, get them in bed. So Joe comes to my house around 10:00.

Tim Ferriss: P.m.?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. So I get them done, we get them in bed, change, and then Joe's there. And we start training. And usually by the time you warm up – takes me a while to warm up at 10:00 at night. You train and do all the stuff. By the time we get done, usually it's 1:00, in that ballpark. And then you get into bed after 1:00. They're up at like 6:00 at the latest. And they're in the room. So there's no really cool ritual. I wish I could say I jump in a Cryochamber. It's usually me stumbling downstairs with them to try to make – every morning, my ritual is – also, ironically, out of your book, Dave Palumbo is –

Tim Ferriss: Jumbo Palumbo.

Paul Levesque: I've been friends with him for years, and he's a big...ketogenic diet guy. So he works with my diet a lot when I'm getting ready for a WrestleMania. So Dave's kinda my diet guy. I use his protein powder, Species Protein. But so: every morning, roll downstairs, two scoops of whey protein, a bunch of Starbucks coffee, powdered Starbucks coffee, some macadamia nut oil, and I make a shake. And that's the start. You gotta get the kick-in going.

Tim Ferriss: So it's powdered Starbucks, macadamia nut oil – what else was in there?

Paul Levesque: Two scoops of Isolyze protein and some ice, blend it all up. It's a Starbucks smoothie kind of concoction, but very healthy, and has enough caffeine in there to at least make me realize what's going on.

My wife and I get them ready for school, jump in the shower. Depending if I'm getting ready for WrestleMania it's either: throw sweats on because I'm gonna bring them to school and then get a workout in – because usually I train twice a day when I'm getting ready for WrestleMania or something – but train and then off to work. If I'm not getting ready for WrestleMania, it's: shower, get ready, suit, bring them to school – we drive them to school, get them to school, get them in their class, do all the stuff, and then drive to the office, start the day, get home at 7:30, 8:00 at night and repeat.

Tim Ferriss: And this is all in Connecticut, is that right?

Paul Levesque: All in Connecticut, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: And the HQ – I wanna say – I'm gonna get this wrong. It's not Stanford, is it?

Paul Levesque: Stanford, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: It is?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. See it right from 95, right off the highway.

Tim Ferriss: Close to the UBS building?

Paul Levesque: Yeah. Down the street, not far.

Tim Ferriss: Friend used live – used to work there. I just – slip of the tongue. “Live there” was probably appropriate. He pretty much lived in the office. What is your role currently at WWE in the executive capacity?

Paul Levesque: So I am the executive vice president of Talent, Live Events, & Creative. So if you look at the core of what we do as a company, from the product itself – Raw SmackDown, all that – and we’re a lot more than that, because we have movies and music. I say all the time, “It’s like saying Marvel a comic book company.” But that’s the core of what we do. I control those aspects.

So: talent – and that goes from – we have a department, Talent Relations, which is like their HR. And they handle everything that has to do with talent, from their travel to anything that has to do with them: all the logistics of WrestleMania week, what talent they’re doing. There’s 1000 appearances for talent, literally, in the week of WrestleMania. They have to handle all the logistics of getting who where, making sure nobody’s late and all of it. It’s a maze. To Talent Development, which is the biggest, probably, thing that’s closest to my heart that I do, which is: where do we find talent? Where do we recruit them from? How do we train them?

We opened a performance center in Orlando, Florida. To a developmental territory or a developmental system that I have called NXT that has become kind of like an alternative brand. Through to: how do they then evolve and get into the main roster of the WWE? So basically what we did is kinda created college football to get guys ready for the NFL.

And then the last part of what I do is Creative, which Vince is kind of the ultimate filter of Creative. I’m more – while I weigh in a lot on that stuff and the content that’s gonna go on the network and all these things, and I weigh in on it from a creative concept – but I’m also approving t-shirt designs and banner designs and going through all that stuff, through all the different departments, and doing the approvals of all that day-to-day process.

Tim Ferriss: Sounds like quite a few hats.

Paul Levesque: It’s a lotta hats. It’s funny: I used to marvel at Vince’s ability – when I first started coming in the office – I’ve had a working, kinda behind-the-scenes relationship with Vince since probably – I started in the WWE in ’95 – since like early ’96. I just was always fascinated with the behind-the-scenes of the business and how it

actually all came together, as much as I was doing it in the ring. And he and I just kinda clicked in that sense, and we started working together.

I didn't meet Steph, his daughter, until quite a few years later. And then we ended up having a relationship and the whole thing. But I had this working relationship with Vince. And as time went on and I got more and more involved in that – and then, kinda later in my career, he kept always asking me, “When are you gonna stop messing around in the ring and come do some real work in the office? You need to be in the office. I need to get you in the office.”

I used to marvel at how many hats he wore and how quickly he could change them. You know, he'd be talking about a foreign tour and box office receipts or a touring strategy or a marketing strategy for that, and then two seconds later he's looking at a t-shirt design and approving colors and that. And then that would go away and how he's looking at some new talent or he's – just was so many hats that he wore. And it used to amaze me at how quickly he could change gears.

And I find myself, now, having to do that same thing. And it's really cool to see yourself grow in that way. Because I used to think, “But how does he keep that all straight?” And at first I couldn't keep it straight. And now – you learn it. You adapt to that process.

Tim Ferriss: I know we only have a few minutes left. I feel like I could ask you questions for hours. So maybe we'll do a Round 2 sometime.

Paul Levesque: I'd love it.

Tim Ferriss: This is great. I'd love to ask you some rapid-fire questions. And I think we could do an entire session just on productivity. But just really quickly: what is the book that you have gifted most to other people? Or any book you've gifted a lot to other people?

Paul Levesque: I don't know that I could answer that question. I don't give books much.

Tim Ferriss: Not a problem.

Paul Levesque: Most of my friends aren't big readers, I guess. I need to work on that.

Tim Ferriss: We can come back to that. What band or song have you been playing most on your iPhone or in the car or otherwise, recently?

Paul Levesque: So lately it's been anything heavy: Metallica, Motorhead. I'm in training mode for WrestleMania. So at 10:00 at night I need to put something on the stereo that just gets me in ass-kicking mode.

Tim Ferriss: If you could only do one or two physical exercises for the rest of your life, movements, what would they be?

Paul Levesque: Wow. I think, at this age, if I could do freestanding bodyweight squats and pushups – bodyweight exercises would be where I would be at. Because I think you can stay in phenomenal shape doing them, and you don't need a whole lot of space or equipment.

Tim Ferriss: I should, at some point, introduce you to a buddy of mine named Travis Brewer who is a top competitor in American Ninja Warrior, and you guys could trade workouts. I think that would be amazing.

Paul Levesque: I bet you that's awesome.

Tim Ferriss: He's a little monster.

Paul Levesque: I bet.

Tim Ferriss: This'll be the last question before I ask you where people can find out more about you online. But what advice would you give your 20-year-old self?

Paul Levesque: "Don't take it all so serious." You know? "And be more open." Man, when you're so focused on making it and you're – I always had fun in the business, and it was one of the things that – I can look at it now and say I didn't take everything so seriously that it was detrimental to me, but there were times when something happened and it'd just eat me up, you know what I mean? And I would be – just couldn't take it because I was so hungry to get to that next place. And you need to keep that perspective of where everything lays out.

There's times when I – over the years – when we've looked at each other – my friends within the business, little group of guys, and we'd always look at each other, and at a certain point in time you just laugh and go, "It's the phony fight business where we wrestle in our underwear." You know what I mean? What am I getting all worked up about?

And I think that is the biggest thing, is just: not taking it so seriously. And then being open to stuff. It's funny: I mentioned that I listened to the Anthony Robbins interview with you, and I was fascinated with it. I met Anthony one time. I was probably 2000. I was just kinda getting to a high spot in my career. And I just happened to be in a hotel. I look over next to me, he's checking in next to me. I [inaudible] big, giant dude. But I recognized him from TV, and he looked over at me, said, "How're you doing?" I said, "Great, how are you?" "Good." Then I grabbed my keys and I went and get in the elevator and he gets in the elevator with me.

And he looked at me and said, "Forgive me. I don't know what you do, but I clearly see people looking at you, and I clearly see you're somebody and I don't – what do you do?" And so I tell him who I am and what I do. And I said, "I've seen you on TV." One of those two second chance meetings in an elevator, right? And this really impressed me: that I get back a couple weeks later and I get a big box of the cassette and his books and all his stuff that he had written me this hand-written letter and sent it – didn't know how to get ahold of me, sent it to the WWE office. Whatever – two weeks, a month later when I come back through the office at some point in time in my travels, they give it to me. And I'm like, "Wow. This is amazing."

I was too young and stupid and un-open at the time to foster a relationship or – I listened to the tapes and I read the books and all that stuff. And if I'd have thought about it, maybe I would've reached back out to say, "Thank you," and, "Hey, this is really cool." And he invited me to one of his seminars. And I was just, at that time, like, "I'm doing good." Was closed to it. I wish I was more open to it. I wish I could've had the bandwidth to not be so absorbed in what I was doing and my moments going for that I could've said, "But this guy could teach me so much. And, man, I should call and just foster that relationship."

Because he put the hand out and I was like, "Gah. I don't need a hand." And those are things that I look at – there's other opportunities in my life that I wish: "Oh, man, I wish – that was right in front of me and I could've grabbed that but I was too narrow-minded to see it."

Tim Ferriss: Well, this has been fascinating. You're a fascinating guy. I would love to do a Round 2 sometime. But we're out of time. I know your schedule is incredibly impressive to me. Where can people find more about you online, say hi, and so on?

Paul Levesque: Twitter – what’s my Twitter handle? It’s like @TripleH? I don’t know. I just know how to push the buttons on it. I don’t actually –

Tim Ferriss: If you search –

Paul Levesque: @TripleH.

Tim Ferriss: Easy peasy.

Paul Levesque: Yeah. WWE.com is – for our company and our site and all that. I do stuff on Twitter, and whether anybody believes it or not, I actually do it. It’s not somebody else doing it. It’s me. So if it’s terrible, it was me. If it was really good, it was me. You know, if you wanna go back and look at my career, the WWE network is a great place to do it. All the historical content is on there. That’s really me.

But, for me, I’m – I know you say I’m fascinating. I’m fascinated by this process and what you do and how you do it. And I’d love to do this again. Because I think these kinda things – it’s funny. A lot of things I said in here when you asked me questions today – I feel like I gave you long-winded answers. I apologize if I did. But I’m almost explaining it to myself as you asked me. I never thought about it that way. So I’m kind of explaining it to you, going, “Yeah. That’s really cool.”

Tim Ferriss: Not long-winded at all. You’re a great storyteller. You’re a great story creator, an incredible performer. And I hope I am – I’ll never be as big as you. But hopefully I will be as bulletproof as you are when I’m 45. So, until next time: thank you so much.

Paul Levesque: Thank you very much, man.

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