



**Episode 63 Transcript**

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### ***Alyssa Ritchey - From the Farm to Weightlifting on the World Stage***

**Nick Collias:** Hey, everybody. Good morning. Welcome to *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast*. It's an interesting week here because we're doing a whole bunch of podcasts at once with athletes from the Bodybuilding.com team, new team members. They run the gamut in terms of how they express strength, the bodies they build doing it. And earlier this morning, for example, we talked to Rob Phillipus, one of the largest strength athletes you'll find around, and now we're talking to [Alyssa Ritchey](#), one of the smallest ones on the team, I would imagine. But you want to talk relative strength? She can clean and jerk double her body weight. Pull just about three times off the floor, right? So, you can do it fast, you can do it slow.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Very impressive. Yep.

**Nick:** She's qualified for Team USA, so the plan is to compete in weightlifting at the 2020 Olympics, right?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Correct.

**Nick:** She's also one of the newest members of Team Bodybuilding.com, so you'll be seeing a lot more of her on the site and in our social media. Thanks for coming and talking with us.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, thanks for inviting me.

**Nick:** Sure, absolutely. So, the Olympics is really just like the latest chapter in what seems like a really long journey for you, right?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, it's not super simple like everyone thinks it is. It's not like you go and win one meet and you're all of a sudden there. You all of a sudden make Team USA and you're on the Olympic Team. You have to make like six qualifying meets and they're all based at different levels. There's gold, silver, and bronze, and basically you have to get these [Robi points](#) at them. So, the higher your combined snatch plus your clean and jerk numbers are, which is your total, that total is the amount of Robi points you get. So, if I get the higher total I get, the more Robi points I get.

**Nick:** Okay.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** So each girl gets Robi points as long as they make one lift, one snatch, one clean and jerk. And based off those Robis accumulated over the process of two years leading up to the Olympics in 2020, depends on which top four girls are going to be chosen for Team USA for the Olympics. So that's kind of how the process goes. It's really complicated, actually, in terms of trying to make sure that you're making a total and not going too heavy where you miss your total completely. There's also women fighting in each weight class for the points, and you got to understand too, you're not going just against your weight class. You're going against all the women. You're also going against the international women, which is kind of quite impossible at some points, because they're not quite all clean. But they're actually honing in on that and busting those women. We saw about six out of eight Thailand team members get busted at the last competition, so that was kind of nice.

**Nick:** It's really interesting. Yeah, because it is the ultimate global strength sport. You've competed in Turkmenistan.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah.

**Nick:** I mean, where else have you competed?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Well, I'm new, so I'm two and a half years into weightlifting, actually this month. So, I'm one of the newer members of Team USA, actually the newest. I have competed in... So, the first year, actually, every meet was in America, unfortunately. I wanted to travel, and one was in Anaheim, California, one was in Miami, Florida, and then the next year, Turkmenistan. I've been in Germany, I've been in Dominican Republic, and then this [Pan Ams](#), which is in six weeks... We're six weeks out from [Pan Am Championships](#), and that's in [Guatemala](#).

**Nick:** Oh, cool.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, I mean, I'm not really excited for that one, but then Worlds is in Thailand. But since all the doping happened, they're not sure if they're going to host it in Thailand, but I think they're going to, because...

**Nick:** Really? I mean that's pretty...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It's too late.

**Nick:** ...pretty late, you would think. Yeah.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. Yeah, the venue would be completely hard to find for a new one.

**Nick:** So, one thing that I love about your story is that it starts where mine did, which is on the farm.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes!

**Nick:** Shoveling crap, feeding animals.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yep. Actually, a funny story about that. Yeah, I did grow up on a farm. I was...

**Nick:** Cattle?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. I raised cattle. I took them to 4-H, showed my animals.

**Nick:** Oh, you were in 4-H, too?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. Yep, yep.

**Nick:** Oh, man.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I got second one year for showing, showmanship or whatever. I can't remember which one it was called. There was like two classes. You take the cows in and show them.

**Nick:** There's the meat quality, and then there's the showmanship.

**Heather Eastman:** Right, right.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes. And I think I got showmanship, second in showmanship. But that was my best year, because I actually worked with my animal. I actually hated it at the time.

**Nick:** Everybody does, but they all look back on it fondly. Me, too.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know!

**Nick:** I hated it.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know. It's so funny, right? And going out, it taught me a lot about hard work, because we had to get up at five in the morning as... How old was I? Probably like 13, 12. Feeding the animals, and then at night I would go and sit in the barn and talk to my dad just on the fence.

**Nick:** I thought you were going to say talk to your cow.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, well, I would! I know, it's weird, but you do.

**Nick:** No, absolutely! You can have a fine conversation with a sheep, I've discovered.

**Heather:** They're great listeners, I found.

**Nick:** Yes!

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, they don't talk back.

**Nick:** Talk to them about your Olympic dream.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, right. Yeah, so I'd just chill with my dad, and help carry buckets and move the straw around. We also had a rope in our barn, so we'd always build little forts and swing on the rope.

**Nick:** Cool.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It was good. It taught us hard work, and my dad always made us do all the work. Girl or boy.

**Nick:** And that's one thing that I liked about it as well, is regardless of what you want to do for play or for exercise or for anything else, the work always has to be done.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes.

**Nick:** Right? So, it's like you learn early on, yeah, you can... Even as a kid, you can push it as hard as you want, but you got to leave a little in the tank, because stuff's got to be done. It's got to be done tonight. It's got to be done tomorrow. There's a certain structure that I feel like I look back on that, and I think, "Yeah. I learned so much just from that." Just from putting in all those reps carrying hay around and things like that, you know? What was your least favorite activity that now you look back on, you're like, "Okay, that was actually pretty good for me."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** From the farm?

**Nick:** Yeah.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, gosh, this is what I was going to tell you actually. My dad hated cleaning the poop out of the barn. So, it was like...

**Nick:** Pitchfork, and...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yep, the pitchfork and then the scraper. Do you remember the scraper?

**Nick:** For sure.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That frigging flat thing? It was kind of like uneven pavement, so it wouldn't scrape real well, so you'd get caught in like the divots and stuff of the cement. And I remember waiting until the last minute to clean the sawdust out, because we didn't use hay. It's not hay. We didn't use straw either. We used sawdust. So, my dad would be like, "All right, listen." He's like, "It's been five weeks, and you have not cleaned your stall out."

**Nick:** Your stall.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** And I was like...

**Nick:** Clean your stall!

**Alyssa Ritchey:** "Dad." I was like, "Okay, I'm going out and doing it." And it was like a 97-degree day, and I remember walking in with little short shorts. And remember, I'm like 14 years old, so I'm little, which makes no difference now because I'm still little. But I walked into the barn, and I remember going in and walking right back into the house to get a bandana to wrap around my face. And I got one, and I put it around my face. I had my little belly shirt on, and I just grabbed the

wheelbarrow, and the shovel, and the pitchfork, and the scraper, and went out and started doing it. And I'll tell you what. The smell was un-fricking-real. Because I'll tell you what, it was so bad.

It was so... Like, it just hits you like a brick wall, because you get under there and you're like all... I know this is going to be really explicit, but the pee and the poop, the oldness of it, was just like, "Ugh!" And I was like, "Dad!" He's like, "I don't care! You're cleaning it out or you're grounded!" And I was like, "Okay, I'll clean it out." And dad was the scary one. Mom was the cool one. So, we had to listen to dad. Dad was cool, too, he's just the more strict one.

**Nick:** Not to get too explicit, but I had those experiences as well. But we would also just have occasionally in the heat of the summer, sheep would just fall over with a heart attack, and you're like, "Oh, crap. We got to get this thing in the back of the truck." Like me and my dad, or me and my dad and my sister were out there. Talk about smells.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know.

**Nick:** But you get close, you're thinking, "I'm going to die. I'm going to throw up. My head is going to explode." But then you just do it!

**Alyssa Ritchey:** You have to do it, yeah.

**Heather:** Sheep smell kind of terrible when they're alive.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Pigs are worse. Pigs are disgusting.

**Nick:** Yeah. Pigs are the worst, yeah.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That's why I don't eat them, because literally just... Ugh, they're just so gross and they're so dumb. They're like...

**Nick:** But they're supposedly the smart ones.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** They are the smart ones, to be quite honest, but they just walk around all... Yeah, whatever. Pigs are pigs. They weren't my favorite.

**Nick:** Anyway, so you were a gymnast as well at this point, right?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes. Nine years old.

**Nick:** So, you were just doing the handstands and gymnastics workout there in the stalls?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. I was nine when I was a gymnast to age like 12 and a half. I was pretty good. Actually, I was really good. I'm really not modest with this part of my life. I was actually striving... Wanted to be in the Olympics. My coach was kind of crazy, so I had to either pull out or realize that I had to deal with the strict intensity of the coach. Now looking back at it, I'm very thankful for her, because it's taught me a lot of mental abilities and also a lot of focus with my mental attitude on stage. So I'm definitely a competitor thanks to her.

**Nick:** So, where did that end? You obviously did not make it to the Olympics.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. You know, my parents always let me choose whether or not I was going to do a sport myself. If I wanted to quit gymnastics at level two, I could quit. I didn't have to. Even if I was the best and I was planning on going to the Olympics, my parents would always let me decide on my own. If I was happy, they would say, "You should stay in it for sure, because you're happy." But if I wasn't happy with it, they let me make the decision. They weren't like those crazy parents that forced me into doing sports. So, I ended up quitting at level six. I got held back a lot. They wanted to win a lot of team trophies, so I was always that one that gave them all the points for team trophies. And so I was held back a lot in level five and six.

And it is unfortunate, because there was one time at camp my best friend got moved up and I didn't, and I was so angry. And so, my plan and plot was to go out there and attack camp, and show the coach that she made an absolute big mistake. And I'm not kidding, I threw everything, like suks on the vault. I threw giants on the bars. I was cast in a handstand. I was doing a full twist on the floor. And all that stuff probably means nothing to these people, but they're really good.

**Nick:** Let's talk about sheep some more and cows some more, please.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** But anyways, by the end of camp, I heard her say on the floor, "I should have moved Alyssa up versus the other girl." And that was what did it for me. I was like, "Yeah, you should've. Because I'm a harder worker, I'm a better athlete, and I will do the best I can in everything I do, and I will prove myself that I deserved that spot."

**Heather:** Well, I like that... Because in your post, you're very upfront about, "I work hard." And I think that women especially get kind of stuck in this, "We have to be more modest," and...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It's so funny you say that. Yep.

**Heather:** So just being able to come out and say, "No, I'm the better athlete. I'm the harder worker. Give me... I've earned this." And I feel like guys have no problem saying that, but why is it, do you think, that women in this sport and in other sports kind of feel like they have to be more modest about it?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I think it's just like back then, you know, women couldn't really stand on their own two feet. They weren't allowed to. It's not that they couldn't. It's that they weren't allowed to. A lot of things just came around for women, you know? We got to join the Olympics, and I don't remember exactly when everything happened, but the women's movement has been getting better every... Every year has been more with stronger women. When I was little, there was no strong women on magazines. There was no strong women in the gym. It was, like, me. I could see me, and everybody else was a guy around me. I think just growing up...

**Nick:** You're talking about in the gym, not in the gymnastics?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Sorry. In the gym, yeah. In the gym...

**Nick:** With gymnastics, there's definitely a precedent for a young woman to really be able to stand out, be strong, have a strong female role model, it seems like.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. And I still think it has to do a lot with the coach too, because there was a really skinny girl on our team, and our coach kept saying how she wanted us to look like her. And I was like, "Honestly, I'm never going to look like that. That's not me. That's not who I am. So, I want to be my thickness. I want to be big quads, big thighs, everything." But bringing back to your statement, I thought about that. I'm very vocal, and I am very... I wear my heart on my

sleeve. And yesterday's post that I put, my morals... I'm very loud with what I say, and I'm not shy at all. I'll say how it is, and if you don't like it, sorry. If you don't like me, that's okay. There's plenty more billions of people in the world for you to like, or for me to be around.

I think some women are afraid to be very vocal because I think we see guys as that's okay for guys to be strong, and powerful, and honest, and upfront. And then when a woman is like that, it's kind of frowned upon still, I feel, because we live in... I don't know. It's just... I don't know why, honestly. I've never been like that though. I've never been quiet. And I think it's because of the way I grew up. I was just very... My dad always taught me, "Never depend on a man." He always said that to me. He's like, "You never depend on a man. That's what I want." He's like, "And also, you get food on your plate and a roof over your head, and that's what I give you. It's not all the extra stuff that matters. Your hard work, and we do not"... He also used to say... I always was just like, "Why don't we have a dishwasher, dad? This is annoying. We should have a dishwasher." He's like, "Yeah, I have three of them. Bobby, Alyssa, and Abby."

**Nick:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's what you have kids for on the farm. It's good to work!

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It's so annoying. But yeah, I don't know why. I'm just a very honest person. Ask any of my friends, they'll all say that's why they love who I am. Because I'm just open and honest, and I have the ability to say what's on my mind. People don't like me at first, which is okay, and then they work with me or they're around me for a little while, and they're like, "Oh, my gosh. You're just so brutally honest, and I love it."

**Nick:** Mm. I mean, do you think part of that is because you just... Seems like you've been doing competitive sports for pretty much your entire life. Okay, gymnastics, then to track and field, onto [CrossFit](#), onto [Olympic lifting](#). Does that single-mindedness of like, "I have to focus on competition," gauge success by competition to a certain degree, does that just keep you honest?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I think so, yeah. Absolutely. I think it definitely has to do a lot with competition, being an athlete. Athletics teaches you a lot about who you are. It's very disciplined. I mean, always disciplined. You always are working out, you're always trying to be better, you're always focused, you're mentally trying to grow your mind with each sport. Especially your mental abilities are so broad. And think about that. Like when you were nine to age 12, what were you doing? Probably just being a kid. Probably playing with Barbies or playing with cars. I was out on the beam trying to figure out how to stay on the beam with these super complex skills. I was trying to focus on making, "How can I make my body better for this sport? How can I be better for this sport?"

**Nick:** I mean, even if we were competing in sports at that age, it's like, for most people, there's a point of expiration where they're like, "Okay, the time for me to be a competitive athlete is over. If I'm going to do something, I'm going to run a race, whatever. Maybe do a bodybuilding show at age whatever." But you kept seeking it out. And one thing I think is interesting about it is we were talking to Kelsey Keele yesterday as well, and there's this point where, you know, with soccer, with gymnastics, with a lot of the high-level women's sports, it kind of funnel into CrossFit now. A lot of those people who maybe they would have reached that expiration point. Now they say, "All right, there's a place for me to go and still be able to get that." What was your introduction to CrossFit? I guess also, what was your introduction to the Olympic lifts like in that setting?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I was 15 years old, and I was training for track and field in high school, and I realized that I wasn't getting much better. I was stagnant almost.

**Nick:** What were your events?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Ready? The 100 hurdles. I would do those. I would do the 300 hurdles, I would do the 4 X 1, and long jump. Those are my races.

**Nick:** So, a few.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** A few.

**Heather:** They're more acrobatic-y, kind of.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, yeah. And people would always think it was funny, because the big, tall 6" girls would always get beat by the 4'10-1/2" chick.

**Nick:** Just flying through the air.

**Heather:** Our best runner on the track team was like the little tiny girl with the big legs.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, because they're powerful, right? They're just getting over those hurdles like it's nothing.

**Nick:** Less wind resistance.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. Exactly. Duh.

**Heather:** Being tall is not help on the hurdles. I tripped over many a hurdle, and I'm 5'9", so...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, it really does it. It's all about the athletic ability, and power, and the agility, and everything.

**Heather:** Yeah, I just outed myself as not athletic, so...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I think there's a certain part of everybody that's a little athletic, but some people are not athletic. It's genetics too, people. But yeah, so I came around, and my coach decided like, "Okay, let's get Alyssa really, really, really good at track and field," and he said, "I want to take you every day for the next week to a guy that does..." Okay. This is when CrossFit wasn't CrossFit, but it was CrossFit stuff. There just wasn't a label smacked on it.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** So, we were doing rope climbs, box jumps, toes-to-bar, running backwards, running forward, running sideways. We were doing snatches, clean and jerks, deadlifts, all this strength and power stuff for track and field. So fast forward two years later, I am making it to State undefeated, and I was the smallest girl ever to make it in my division, and I did really well. I podiumed in all of my events, and then I transitioned from high school track to college track. I actually broke my foot skateboarding. I was ollieing off of a five-stair. And I had landed it, dang it, but I had tried it again with my new skateboard because I was pumped, and I ollied, and I came down and I... You know how a ballerina and a gymnast point their toes? Well, the gymnast in me pointed my toes coming off of the good five-foot drop, and I landed straight on it.

And first thing I did was picked my foot up. I couldn't touch it to the floor. And I was so... Yeah, and it broke. So I had a Lisfranc dislocation with a fifth metatarsal break, which was basically it popped out of socket. So anyways, had surgery on that, and so I quit the track team in college. So I got like a 3/4ths, almost full ride, to University of Toledo. And I basically said to myself, "All right. Well, I'm done." Once I broke my foot, I knew... I was kind of going to quit anyway, because I wasn't in love



with it anymore. Once I'm out of love with something... I'm a wholehearted person. I will put everything into it, and if I find myself falling short or not 100 percent at it, I will quit because I don't feel like I should push myself any harder if I don't love something. I'm like that with everything I do in life, with relationships, with anything. So, that's just the...

**Nick:** You're in or you're out.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I'm in or I'm out. That's who I am. Friendships, too. I either love you, or I don't.

**Nick:** What did you think of the Olympic lifts at that point? Did you think like, "Oh, my god, this is so boring. We're just doing clean and jerks all day." Or were you like, "Oh, this is cool."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Okay. So that's actually something funny. I'm glad you asked that, because I walked up to... He's like, the trainer's like, "Come here." The guy that started training me, like the CrossFit stuff. He's like, "Come here. I want to ask you a question." And I was like, "Okay." And this is two weeks... I'm talking one day a week for four weeks, five, or actually like two months before track season started. So I'd go two months before track season started, one day a week, to train with this guy. And he's like, the second week he met me, he's like, "Come here." And I was like, "What?" And he's like, "You want to do another sport?" And I was like, "What?" And he's like, "Weightlifting."

I was like, "No, I don't want to be a boy!" I was like, "I don't want to look like a little boy!" And he's like, "No, you won't look like a boy, you'll just get really strong." And he's like, "It'll be really good for your track and field, and it's something..." He's like, "The way you walk up to that bar, girl." He's like, "You have so much confidence in yourself. It's unreal." And I was like, "Okay, fine." So, I did what any typical...

**Nick:** Okay, fine, I'll...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I did. I was like, "Okay, fine. I'll lift. I'll be really good."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I was undefeated and hit state records. I think I still hold them actually to today. This was when I was 15 years old. My family didn't have the money to allow me to travel to Junior Nationals and stuff... but I made it to Junior Nationals and stuff.

**Nick:** You were showing some potential.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes, I was showing a lot of potential, but I didn't like it, so I stopped doing it.

**Nick:** What didn't you like about it?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I thought it was, when you're 15 years old, I wanted to do track. I didn't care for weightlifting. I just wanted to do weightlifting to get better at track. That was my main focus was track. As I said, if I'm 100% in, I'm 100% in. I do not want something else to steer my focus in the wrong direction. Track and field was my direction, and weightlifting was steering me into like a dead end, so. It was making me stronger, so I knew I had to do it to get stronger. But I didn't want to compete in it.

**Heather:** Then the natural question is that, "At what point did that switch over?" Now you are competing in it, so.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah so then I did CrossFit for about four years, and I loved it.

**Nick:** Did you do a bikini show somewhere in there too?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, I did.

**Heather:** Wait, wait.

**Nick:** I saw that mentioned one time.

**Heather:** I didn't find that. You did bikini?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I looked sexy. Yeah, I didn't, I looked fine.

**Heather:** Did you fit the Oreos into your macros for bikini or?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That's the funny ... So, there's so many little stories that you guys are nailing right now, that is so cool.

**Nick:** As I started to dig into your back story, I was like, "She's done everything", and then you kind of come back full circle to it. Yeah, I was wondering if you thought that Olympic lifting is a grind...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, yeah.

**Nick:** ... preparing for a bikini show is the ultimate boring grind isn't it?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I'm sorry, but it was dumb. It was like really stupid. I'm sorry, I know if people love it, then that's fine, it's nothing against you guys that truly love the sport because I know this is Bodybuilding.com, hello, we've got a...

**Nick:** It's all an expression of the same ritualized mindset.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, you're dedicated, you're dedicated to something, I think it's cool when you're trying to get your body to look or to do different things, I respect all athletes. But for me, it was dumb and I did not like it. I did not like the fact that somebody was judging the way I looked versus the way...

**Heather:** It's a brutal sport.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It is because honestly, you have to look a certain way. You have to be beautiful, you have to have big boobs, I do not clearly. I also ate a piece of chocolate cake the week of. My fricking ex-boyfriend brought it home and it looked so good.

**Heather:** Ah, you made it this far...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I mean I did so well, I really wasn't. I didn't know what I was doing. I was just doing it to try to just to compete again, literally.

**Heather:** Yeah, just to do it yeah.

**Nick:** I mean not to criticize you, but these are things you could have anticipated. You're like, "Hey wait, they're going to judge me on how I look?"

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know.

**Nick:** "This is a bikini show."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know, weird.

**Nick:** "Nobody said anything about judging you on how you look."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** What do you mean? I just found that it was like the girls that won against me, the way they looked compared to the way I looked I was like, "Wait, what? How did you"...

**Nick:** A lot of people it seems had that experience before.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. It wasn't even that the show wasn't as crazy as you've seen it girls at The Arnold or you see girls at these really big pro meets, these girls didn't look like that. I felt like I fit a little better into the category, but also I might have been too muscular for the category I was in. These girls were a little more slender, whereas I was a little more built in certain areas. That's what I love about me is that I am more built, I am thick I call myself, even though people don't say that. Two c's.

**Heather:** Actually you said, "Genetics is my friend." I have you quoted as saying, "Genetics is my friend" in reference to your ability to just kind of eat you mentioned Oreos eat and not really have it affect you in a negative way. You mentioned the story of you had a girlfriend that was trying to follow your diet, and she had to stop because she just couldn't eat like you.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That's my best friend. Yeah there was a summer where we just ate kind of whatever we wanted, and yeah genetics is my friend. Both my parents, my mom's like 110 pounds, my dad's like 140 on a good day. My parents are super tiny. If I stopped working out tomorrow, I would be like 100 pounds wet. It's just I'm very small. Right now, I'm 116, 118 around there. I'm way more muscular because of sports. Also, I used to think that about my diet, but I like the way I eat now better than the way I used to eat before. Honestly, I felt like crap. I woke up with headaches, stomach aches. I was lethargic, I felt draggy all day. My athletics started suffering from CrossFit. That's a lot of the reason why I had to stop CrossFit, it's because my diet was not on point, and that's so important. I didn't know that. I didn't grow up in a family of like, "Eat your vegetables. Chicken's good for you. We have to eat 90/10 meat. We have to eat good carbs, healthy carbs."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** No, we had like Little Debbie's, we had margarine in the house. We had big lasagnas. We never...

**Nick:** Normal.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Literally like the southern Midwest diet, that's what we did. Thank God for genetics because if I did not have genetics, I'd literally be huge because I love to eat. For a little girl, I can put away food. I just yeah, genetics was my friend, now I like dieting. I like dieting loosely, let's say that loosely right? It's eating healthy, that's what I like to do. I don't just like to eat...

**Nick:** You have a very specific performance mindset now, too.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, absolutely.

**Nick:** Yeah the world is watching in a little bit of a different way than maybe they were when you were just doing CrossFit even, right?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, right exactly. CrossFit was so, it was like, "Oh, I can eat whatever I want because I'm a CrossFit athlete", no, that's not true. You've got to eat good. It's performance at that point. If you want to be the best, you've got to hang with the best, you've got to eat like the best. You've got to recover like the best. You've got to do everything like the best. These girls are crazy, we're all crazy. All elite athletes are crazy. We will go above and beyond any point to get to that level. That's why we're at this level, because we are crazy.

**Nick:** Sure.

**Heather:** Well and that feels like the inevitable point that all elite athletes have to get to is when you finally realize it is nutrition. "They were right all along. I tried to ignore it." Once you get that nutrition component, is when you reach that next level.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, absolutely. People say they want to be at that next level, but do they want to be at that next level? If you were to follow me around all day, you would probably not like most of the things. It's like pretty boring. I mean I get up, I have my coffee, and then I eat breakfast. It's a very set breakfast. It's egg whites, toast and almond butter and some vegetables or avocado with toast, egg whites and vegetables. It's pretty boring. You know what? I've grown to love it. It's not that I'm teaching myself to love it, I kind of am in a sense, but I also feel good. I feel really good all day. I used to feel like crap, you guys.

**Nick:** You would go up and down.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Oh, my gosh, up and down. So much sugar. Sugar just destroys you. Yeah, it's great once in a while. I tell you what, after switching my diet has made me a whole different person. It has helped my weightlifting. I can't not be on a diet in this sport. I cannot not eat healthy because this sport is a weight class sport, so you have to. Whether you like it or not, if you want to be at this level, you have to probably make a weight cut. Some women they're like, "You don't have to weight cut in weightlifting." No you don't, but if you want to be elite level and you want to be good in your class, you probably are going to have to weight cut. Most of those girls, there's probably one Sarah Robles, she's probably the only one, she's our heavyweight, she is the only one that does not have to cut weight. She can eat like a mama and I love it, I'm jealous of her.

**Nick:** You did a fairly substantial cut was it last year or?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, I did it two years ago.

**Nick:** Two years ago...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It was 15 pounds, 7.7 kilos or something like that.

**Nick:** ... which for your body weight is...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, I mean I was 55 kilos to 48.

**Nick:** One percent of your body weight or something you know?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** When people say like, how do they say it? "You're so lean already! How do you have that much to lose?" It's like, "Oh you got it." Five pounds, that's water. They don't realize there's a sauna involved, there's spitting involved, spitting as in getting rid of water. It's not just going low calorie and not a lot of food. A bodybuilder's diet is so different from weightlifters. We try to keep as much lean muscle mass and try to keep the food coming in to supply us versus a bodybuilder, they can kind of go out there empty stomached and be okay and pose and everything, right? Us, it's like we have to have food in us. We're lifting a lot of weight over our head. If we can't be supplied with the right nutrients, it's probably not going to happen.

**Nick:** For sure. Yeah I mean the obvious question is how you maintained your strength or how you have maintained your strength. I also find myself wondering, "Did it just change your body composition set point to a certain degree to have to cut that much? Are you a different person physically after that?"

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. It's easier to be, so like they say Dr. Rhonda Patrick, I kind of listen, yeah I love her, she is amazing. She was talking about once you keep your body composition down for like a year, usually your body can stay down there. I definitely see that. I was basically 51.5 to 52 kilos all last year, and now we put a lot more volume into our training so my body mass has gone up. I sit about 53 to 54 kilos, yeah that seems heavy, but at the same time, when you put more volume into your training, you're going to gain more lean muscle tissue. Yes, I see my lean muscle mass increasing versus my fat. Yes, I know I'm not fat. It's just the composition from back if you looked at me five years ago, I had a lot of muscle mass, but I also had a little chunk. I had a lot less lean muscle tissue right versus fat composition. That's pretty interesting to look at.

**Nick:** Sure. I know people who have cut for weight classes and the story can end either with them being like, "Oh, it worked perfectly, I did it" or they're like, "I got down there and I lost..."

**Heather:** All the strength.

**Nick:** ...the strength on competition day. I was toast." How did you navigate that?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I started working with a nutrition company and I love them, and I still work with them, too, today. What I did was I basically... so remember how you asked me how it is I switched to weightlifting? Basically, what I did is my body was struggling with CrossFit, and I decided to switch to weightlifting, actually I decided just to strength train because I just wanted to get really, really frigging strong because I love being strong. It's such a sexy feeling walking into the gym and being able to put over a double bodyweight in a clean and jerk is the coolest feeling. Squatting is pretty sick, too.

Anyways, I switched to weightlifting just to strength train, just to get stronger. I didn't want to compete. I was tired of competing. So, I said to myself, "All right, I'm going to call up my sponsor, and I'm going to see what he has to say, and see if he wants to hook me up with Max Aita", which is my weightlifting coach now. He said, "Why don't you just do weightlifting?"

I was like, "What?" I was like, "No, I don't want to compete." The whole point is not to compete. Like I said, "I'm in it 100% or I'm not in." I know myself. I told him, I was like, "I honestly just want to get strong." He's like, "Well, get strong and do a sport." I was like, "Okay, I'll try it." Two days later, I call him up, I made my decision. I was like, "Sure, I'll try it."

**Nick:** Fine.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** "Twist my arm." I did it. Then that's when I called up the nutrition company and I said "Hey"...

**Nick:** Renaissance?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes, Renaissance Periodization.

**Nick:** We hear a lot of people who worked with them.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Nick Shaw. Yep. He was actually the person who I was working with. I told Nick I was like, "Hey, man. Let me tell you what." Mind you, American Open, which is the competition that we're striving for it is right after Thanksgiving, the week after. I was pretty upset about that because Thanksgiving's my favorite holiday and I love it so much. Anyway, so I told Nick, I was like, "Hey, man", I was like, "I want to cut from 55 to 48." He was like, "What?" He was like, "Okay. You realize how hard this is going to be right?" I was like...

**Nick:** We're not talking pounds here, we're talking kilos.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, yeah kilos, kilos.

**Nick:** That's a lot of kilos.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That's 15 pounds I had to lose, 7.7 kilos. My body weight was already 55 kilos, and that's 122 pounds, I think?

**Heather:** Somewhere about there.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah somewhere about there. I remember being like, "Yeah, whatever, I'll do this." Nick's like, "Okay. Do you realize this is over Thanksgiving, all of the holidays?" I was like, "Yes I do. Can we just start it?" The next...

**Nick:** Anything else you want to tell me?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I know. Anything else you want to do to destroy this decision because it's destroying it very fast. I didn't really know how hard it was going to be until it was about four weeks out from competition, and I did it all wrong. I did it all wrong. I cut too fast, I did everything wrong. So, when I got to competition, I was fine. I can tell you it was the last time I placed silver. I was like, "I'm going to figure this cut out. I'm going to nail this weight cut that way every time I go into the competition, my best asset—basically my secret weapon—is the weight cut." No other girl can nail it as good as I can. I'm very confident with that because I tell you what. Some of the girls that cut weight I'm just like, "Why? What are you doing? That's dumb, that's silly." The way I cut weight it's very strategic. I don't get chances to practice a weight cut, right? I don't want to practice cutting my body weight off when I'm practicing, that makes no sense because that would destroy my training cycle.

Weight cut puts my out usually two weeks after. It takes me about another three weeks to get my mind back into place. That's about five weeks it takes to recover from a 49 kilo weight cut for me. When I cut weight, I'm very strategic. I watch everything I do. I write down everything. I write down times of what time I eat, how much I weigh. During certain hours I lose about .08 per hour, so I write that down. I make sure that I'm writing down how much I lose from night to morning, and then from what time I weigh from the morning to the night and then night to morning. This way I can find everything and little holes in my weight cut, or I can find successes like, "Oh, well I ate this, I ate more protein today and more fat and I weighed less the next day." A lot of that has to do with veggies hold a lot of water and so do carbs. We got to get lean has to do with water load a week out. I load with a lot of water. I...

**Nick:** You sound like a bikini competitor when you talk like that.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Right? When I'm competing, I literally could step on the stage and crush those girls because my body is so lean. You saw me in some of [my Instagram photos](#), I am like cut, but I look weird because my head looks a little big on my body. I do not like it. I definitely like my weight where I'm at now. I like that thickness. I like being a little more, I like feeling strong and plump. I like it.

**Nick:** Does your strength hold through these cuts?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, absolutely. That's why it's my secret weapon because I know how to hold the strength on. I basically, this last weight cut was my most successful, and my most successful weightlifting competition of my career, which is in December I was able to cut you ready for this, 1.7 kilos four and a half hours out. That is so, so fricking hard.

**Nick:** That's like a wrestler, man.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** That's like five pounds? It's more like wrestling I would compare weightlifting to because the weight cuts are pretty darn similar, except I'm not dressing in trash bags, and I'm not wrapping myself in saran wrap to try to lose weight. I'm literally in and out of the sauna. To build a picture for you, if you had seen me in the back room, you would think I would be nothing when I stepped on stage. You would think "there is no way this girl is going to be recovering from this. She is literally dying right now." I have my Dixie cups seven of them sitting around me with all spit, my Mentos laying everywhere because that's what I use to chew and spit with, because it builds up a lot of saliva. I do that, and then I would get in and out of the sauna numerous times, head to the weight scale, weigh myself. I was literally in no bra, just a T-shirt, soaking wet. I looked miserable. I had just my underwear on. It's just like at that point, it's like...

**Nick:** You don't care.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** ...no, you don't care. I would walk around them naked if I could because it's just like at that point I just...

**Nick:** Staggering.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** ...yeah, I don't care, go ahead. Yeah, one girl saw I remember coming up she saw me in the back-room weight cutting, and then she saw me out on stage crushing it. I think that's where people have the misconception. It's like the reality versus just the success, right? The reality of the sport is it's really hard to be able to do what I do to get on that stage and compete. Most people would never want to do it, and that's why they're not in my position, because I'm able to do that. I'm able to bring my mind into a crazy, dark, psychotic place to get myself on that stage to compete for that gold. While other people don't want to do the back-room stuff, I want to do that stuff because I want to be successful.

**Nick:** Without giving away too much, what's the secret between that hour when somebody sees you and is like, "She's dying" and then ... What happens between there and when you're on stage?

**Heather:** That transition from the back room.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, I don't mind sharing it because I still don't think girls could mimic it, and they're probably not going to watch, it's okay. I just won't tell them to watch my top competitors. I'm sure they have their secrets, too. Basically, what I did was two hours out it was 11 o'clock, 11 am,

and I cut about probably one kilo off. By doing that, I sauna for 20 minutes. The first trip in, the sauna was 20 minutes, and then I'd come out and spit like a half cup, and then I'd rest for about I don't know 10, 15 minutes. As I was resting, I'd put ice on the back of my neck or on my head to cool me off, and then I'd go in. I probably did about six sauna trips anywhere from seven to 15 minutes I would say, and then I would weigh myself in. After final weigh ins, which is the point where you step on the scale, as long as I'm 49.00 to a tee, I'm fine, I made weight. Anything over, which I was, I was .02 over, I had to go back up and sauna for like five minutes.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It's nothing. It's literally two seconds of saunaing. Then I walked back down and I made weigh in. As soon as you step off that final weigh in scale, you have to drink an entire Pedialyte. Do not chug it, just drink it. Drink it within that first half hour. You have two hours before we compete. From final weigh in, you have two hours till you compete on stage depending on where you're at in the lineup. Depends on if your number's really high, then you're probably one of the last girls to get on stage. If you're one of the lower end numbers, lower numbers, you're probably one of the first women. I was the last, so I knew I had plenty of time. I was like, "Okay, I'm fine." As soon as the Pedialyte gets in me, it's like hydration just is like boom, yeah I'm hydrated again, I start waking up. The thing, the turning point for me was the thing that I tried this time. Like I said, I do trial and error at these meets, and I changed two things at this meet.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I did a latte, it was awesome. It was a honey latte, and it was just...

**Nick:** Oh, okay so a little glycogen in you, too.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I put my normal latte which is like 12 grams of honey with whole milk and espresso. It was over ice. I had a girl get it for me because I was like, "You know what? Why don't I just try a latte", because that's something that I always have. I always have my coffee before I go in and work out, but it's just normally black coffee. I didn't want something too much caffeine, because I didn't want to feel jittery on stage, so I just did a latte.

That was the point where I was like, "Whoa, okay. I am ready to rock 'n roll." I also had, another thing I did different was I ate three ... Do you know those maple brown sugar Quaker oats packages? I had three of those and I couldn't stop eating them. I like forced myself to stop, because I was like, "I'm going to be sick." Because you can't have too much, because what happens is if you have too much, you will get a stomachache and you'll feel really, really, really tired when you go out there. So normally, I eat and then go straight to the competition area to like sit and chill. But this time, I was like, the latte really got me like bright-eyed, versus like laying on the platform and just being like, "We have to go in like 10 minutes. I'm dying!"

So, the three packs of oatmeal, the Pedialyte and then the latte, and no fats, because fats will sit in your stomach like a rock. So, you can't do that. You want anything that's fast absorbed.

**Nick:** Sure.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** So, like white rice, bouillon cubes, they have a lot of sodium in it. You want a lot of sodium, because you depleted your cells of all that because you've been water cutting for the last 24 hours. You're pretty much not eating anything the day of the final weigh-ins either so you gotta get your food level kind of like back up without overstuffing yourself. So, I eat a normal amount of protein as well, I usually eat like six ounces of protein.

**Nick:** Before the meet?



**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. So, like I'll do some chicken, and then the maple brown sugar oatmeal with the Pedialyte, and then the latte. That's probably my normal routine before I start warming up.

**Nick:** That's interesting.

**Heather:** So not dissimilar from a competitor's diet that you have.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Really?

**Heather:** Well, yeah, very similar because you're cutting. You're trying to get the water out of your skin to shrink-wrap that skin to your muscles, so very similar in the sense that you wanna get that water out. The only difference is we don't get the Pedialyte.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah. Yes.

**Nick:** But it's also interesting, like...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** 'Cause you guys don't wanna blow up, right? My stomachs bloat when I walk out there, it looks like I'm a little pregnant. Which is fine.

**Nick:** Sounds like you're banking on your body's ability to really rehydrate quickly more than anything.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, so the whole point is just to cut that water off the last day, it's not to get rid of the food. Obviously I'm not eating anything but come on, there's people out there that don't eat for seven days, like seven numerous days, right? They don't...I'm talking like poor people that can't afford food. I am not starving because I'm not eating for twelve hours, I'll survive. But it's the water that gets me. It's like the dehydration. We try to get to the point where you're not dehydrating yourself, we're still peeing and still able to push just a little more urine out.

But this point was probably my hardest weight cut ever because I cut so much off in water, so that's why it was so successful. Because as soon as I drank that Pedialyte guess what? All my water weight, all my sodium and everything was back. But I then do another Pedialyte so I just sip on that while I'm snatching and clean and jerking, so there's like a ten-minute break between snatch and clean and jerk. I also, instead of doing just a boring protein bar because I'm sorry, but protein bars, yeah, they're great and whatever, people can say they're good but honestly at that point I'm not in the mood for one. So, my boyfriend's like, "Do a Snickers bar," and I was like, "Okay". I'm not one for candy or bars or whatever but I was like "actually, that's pretty smart" because I seriously open that sucker and I ate it in like two minutes. And I noticed that I did and I was like "I should've brought another one". "I should've got another one of those."

**Nick:** I mean, I imagine your brain just lights up from getting that at that point.

**Heather:** Oh, yeah.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, 'cause I felt so good, right. Normally, at the end of my warm-ups and clean and jerk, they're kind of slow and lethargic feeling and just like blah. I kind of start feeling like I get crushed. This time, between having the latte, because I saved about half of it for the clean and jerk, so I let it just sit there, even though it was like kind of watered down it's not like you care at that moment. So, it's like I drank that, and then I ate the Snickers bar, and I think I ate half another bar just to stay like full.

Basically, what you want to do is in between CrossFit events you don't want to just sit there and not eat. You want to eat because your body has burned off fuel.

**Nick:** Right, but you also don't want to throw up.

**Heather:** Right, right.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** You also don't want to throw up. CrossFit's a lot more like you lose, you're using and tapping into more systems so you're losing a lot more fuel. Versus weightlifting is very quick and anaerobic. We're not even tapping into anything really. We're just like one lift and you're done. But still, from not eating all day you got to replenish and refuel between your lifts.

**Nick:** I find myself wondering, so yeah, you did CrossFit for a while and now you're much more specialized. Do you feel like the specialization and the programming that goes with Olympic weightlifting actually pays off more in terms of carrying over to just overall functionality, feeling good, being able to surprise yourself with what you're capable of doing?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Like does weightlifting do that?

**Nick:** Yeah, more than CrossFit? Or how do they compare? Just yourself as an overall athlete when you're like "Alright, well I feel invincible." Do you feel that more capable when you're a CrossFitter or now that you're a more specialized athlete?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I loved both sports. There's a heart, like I still have a place in my heart for CrossFit and I still love weightlifting. I actually thought I was gonna hate weightlifting when I first started it. 'Cause I was like "Oh gosh, repetitive back squat, front squat, clean and jerk, snatch, woohoo boring." And I actually thought my body wasn't gonna handle the volume because I was like "Oh, my gosh, I'm gonna get demolished." I'm gonna hurt my back, I'm gonna hurt my leg, my knees are gonna start hurting. Honestly nothing. I feel like CrossFit is a little more dangerous in the aspect of getting hurt easier because you're moving weights fast versus concentration. Weightlifting is very controlled and very focused so you're not lifting things like crazy and not paying attention to what you're doing. Every rep you have a good set up for, you make sure you breathe and brace properly, and you make sure every rep is executed perfectly.

In CrossFit, you can kind of get away, not as much anymore because these girls are pretty freaking good. If you look at Tia, Tia Toomey, that won [The CrossFit Games](#). The reason she's winning The CrossFit Games is number one: she's a freaking good athlete; but number two: she is very efficient in the way she moves. Her efficiency is incredible. She is able to move that barbell so beautifully, and I think if every girl was more efficient, like there are some girls in the CrossFit world that still scare me to death. Where they catch their cleans or their snatches and maybe I'm more picky now because of what sport I'm in, but at the same time I am just like, "Gosh, if you just clean that up a little bit, you'd be so much better. You'd be like hitting thirty, forty more pounds in these lifts."

So, I feel more safe with weightlifting because of the fact that it's more controlled and it is a safer sport overall. The statistics show it, track and field's actually more dangerous than weightlifting, statistically. But, I don't know, I feel like as an elite athlete you don't really think?—this is gonna sound really bad to people—but you don't always think about your body all the time. Any elite sport that you do: football, basketball, track and field, gymnastics, anything. Anything you do is not healthy. When marathon runners run across that line, they're pooping and peeing themselves, how is that healthy? When freaking football players are running into each other with their heads, or pulling on each other's helmets, or yanking people down on the ground, or falling from five feet in the air on their

backs, is that healthy? No. So, any sport at the elite level I don't think is super healthy. Like my weight cuts, they're not healthy a week out. No way. I'm not gonna lie to you and say they are, but, I love the sport and I love what I do. So, I'm gonna do anything I can to be that top, elite athlete.

**Nick:** Sure. And it's a sport that has a massive global community. You've now been at meets all over the world with women from all sorts of different countries. How different, what do you learn from them and how different is how you see your sport being expressed in all these different countries. Like is everyone kind of sort of doing variations of the same things or are you like "Wow, that's mind blowing how she's so different than me."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, so when I first started weightlifting, and this is just in America, I was at one of the meets and I was at the back and my warmups were so ugly, and I was expecting to win the competition. And I was like "Oh, my gosh, my warm ups are the ugliest back here. This is kind of sad it looks so terrible." And then my coach looked at me and said, "Do you want to be king of the warm ups or do you want to win?" And I was like, "Oh, yeah. It's queen by the way, queen of the warm ups." And he goes, "Yeah, well, just focus on winning. Who cares what you look like right now? We'll focus on fixing that."

I wish... these girls from other countries, they're so... their technique is never different. You can see them touch the bar, and do a warm up with the bar, and you can see them hit a PR, like a personal best, and it would look the exact same. Not all, but most. These women are very efficient, they're very technically sound. They're just, they move very well. The difference between me and them is that I don't move as well. Because I'm newer, I can't really... two and a half years is very, very new to weightlifting. I've been doing it for two and a half years exactly like I said.

**Nick:** And they've been doing it since age eight maybe.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** They probably were stolen out of their homes, like they're normally you know like the gymnasts were from China and taken in and forced into flexibility and forced into gymnastics.

**Nick:** It's easy to find videos of kids eight and under doing Olympic lifts all over the world.

**Heather:** Oh, yeah.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes, yes, yes. Yeah and now you see the movement with CrossFit is introducing weightlifting way more, thank God. Because CrossFit has really, really made the sport shine more and it deserves it because weightlifting's a really cool sport. So, yeah I guess the thing is, it's cool to be around those big athletes because what you see is we're all pretty similar in the way we care about the sport and the way we want to be the best. We're all very different though in the way we approach the sport, we all have our own things. Like I'm okay going on an adventure one day before a heavy session and some girls are not okay with it, they want to sit in their rooms and rest their legs. And that's okay 'cause we're all different and that's why we're different athletes, that's why we're at different levels. Or the same level but we're just different athletes. But it's very cool to learn from these girls 'cause the discipline is unreal with these women and you look up to them a lot and you see the way they are. I'm very like "La la la, yah!" in practice like crazy and fun and laughing and smiling. Even when I'm in the back warming up, that's just how I am. I'm very just fun, I have a lot of fun. But some girls they put their headphones on and they don't want to look at anybody. They just want to have their own space, they don't want to talk to you, they don't want to look at you, and yeah.

**Nick:** Yeah, that was gonna be my next question was, how you prepare that five minutes, ten minutes, before a big lift. You're just happy strolling out on stage "here we go" or do you...

**Alyssa Ritchey:** I'm a different person on stage.

**Nick:** Do you need to really focus yourself? Like I need to get in my headspace, I need to have this ritual because, yeah, maybe this is a ritual that they've had enforced their entire life. You've only had two and a half years. Do you feel like you've even found your pre-lift ritual yet?

**Alyssa Ritchey:** No, I don't. I just think my biggest thing is no negative thoughts. If you can go out there and you can prepare your mind to be like "I'm gonna get this." So, back in December, I hit my best clean and jerk ever. It was a 105 kilo clean and jerk, so about 231 pounds for a 108 pound woman. And I hit that and it was like, the thing stepping on that stage, there was no thoughts. The only, there was, I guess there was a thought, but the only thought I had was, "You're gonna get this, you've been practicing." You almost make yourself cry 'cause you're like so excited and you're like so drawn into the sport. And you practice so much, and you work so hard, and you only get six minutes on stage. You get a minute per lift, so you get six lifts in six minutes. And so you don't get much time and so when you walk on that stage you have to be ready. There's one negative thought in your mind and you're probably gonna not be able to lift that weight, you're actually not gonna be able to lift that weight. One little doubt creeps in and you're done.

So, when I walked on stage for that 105 it was like, "Alright Alyssa, you've done this. You can do this. This is fine. This is light." And then I walked up to the bar and as soon as I pulled the bar off the ground, I was like, "Pfft, yeah this is going up for sure." I was like "this is easy" and then I caught it and usually if I have to double bounce, which means when I get stuck on the bottom and you have to do a couple bounces to get out, I am done. Like it's over. And my coach, if you look at his eyes he's like, "Oh, my goodness, she's done. She's not gonna make it." And that's when I was like, I pushed my knees as hard as I can forward, and I started standing it up and I got to the next point where I usually fail is the half way point of standing the lift up from the clean. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh you cannot do this. No effing way you're missing this lift. You push those elbows up and you drive out, girl, 'cause you're going, we're going all the way." It's like this psychotic, "Hahaha we're getting," there.

**Nick:** And all that takes place in like three seconds. That's what's most amazing.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes, I know.

**Nick:** It sounds like you're talking about a ten-minute journey here.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, you think it's like, it is seconds, but you have this like, it's almost like a breakdown when you're out there hitting the lift. It's like you catch it, you start it, you catch it, you stand it up. It takes like two seconds but when you're out there, it seems like it takes years, like minutes. And that's why I have these, this is literally what went through my head when I was making those lists. Like, I was just like as soon as I hit that half-way point from standing up the clean it was like, all I could think of was coming off that floor without that lift. And I was like, "No, not this time. I'm not gonna be disappointed. I'm not gonna feel sorry for myself because I missed that lift. That's not who I am anymore. I am gonna show the world that I am strong enough, I am good enough to be out here lifting this weight. It's not gonna crush me anymore." So, I stood it up, and that was the point of like, "Okay, my jerk's 120 kilos, it's more than the world record."

So, I knew that that jerk was going up. So as soon as I stood up the lift was over, all I have to do not is put it over my head. And when I did, my face was just like "Yah, I did it". Which I shouldn't have gotten excited that fast 'cause my core was like wobbly like a wave in the ocean. And I was laughing 'cause I was like "Oh, my gosh, you gotta hold it. Hold it girl." And then I stopped and I was like, just broke down in tears 'cause it was the moment in my career in my history in sports in general, I

realized that I could push past, my body was able to push past so much more than I could've ever, ever thought in my whole life. I know it's a lift, but it means so much to you when it's your sport. So, going out there and hitting that lift was... honestly, if I didn't make the Olympics, it wouldn't matter, because that lift was like so cool and I wish I could rewind it a million times back. 'Cause it was like...

**Nick:** You can.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yeah, I can just keep doing it. Right?

**Heather:** They've got it [on film](#).

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Yes, that's true. But I couldn't stop crying. Like I got off stage and I just could not stop crying. It was like all the—and I don't wanna cry—all the hard work and everything you do is like—oh, I'm gonna cry. It's like so crazy 'cause it's like, it's like trying to get a new job, right? Like going from an intern and nailing this big job in a big corporation is like the coolest thing you could ever do. That was that lift. It was like, just mind-blowing. 'Cause it was like, holy cow. I did that. All my hard work and my abilities could do that. So, I don't know why I'm crying. But yeah, it's neat to see.

**Nick:** Yeah, absolutely. And it sounds like it's the sort of thing that could set you up to be like, "Oh yeah, I have to do this at the Olympics now."

**Alyssa Ritchey:** It just makes you, it makes you, as soon as I left that day, it was like I know think I could do anything. There is no, there is nothing that can hold me back from getting, "Why can't I get 110? Why can't I get a 90-kilo snatch? Why can't I beat China? I know, maybe an American has never beat China but why can't I? Why can't I be the first woman to stand on that podium and get a gold medal, y'know? Like why?" I think it's here. A lot of the time people think it's physical but a lot of it's mostly mental. And I think if we give and open up our mind to a different area, a different area in our brain, I think we can really start tapping into those emotions that we know are capable of anything as long as we just put our whole heart and our mind into it because we're so much more capable as human beings than we give ourselves credit for.

**Nick Collias:** Wow, thanks so much for coming to talk to us. Fantastic story. Alyssa Ritchey, we're going to be watching your journey from here to Tokyo, for sure.

**Heather Eastman:** Absolutely.

**Alyssa Ritchey:** Thank you.



### [OLYMPIC LIFTER QUIANA WELCH: BREAKING RECORDS AND BENDING IRON](#)

Welch, a Signature-sponsored athlete, overcame a hardscrabble upbringing to become an elite Olympic lifter.