



**Episode 71 Transcript**

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### ***Quads Like Robb: The Ritual of Routine***

**Nick Collias:** Rollin'. Well, all right then. Hello there! Good morning, everyone. Welcome to *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast* here in Boise, Idaho. I'm [Nick](#), the host up in here. It's early, we're up when you're not. I've got my teeny, little espresso cup here. So, does [Robb Philippus](#), our guest over here.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, it's mini-

**Nick:** That's exactly right. [Heather Eastman](#) over here, you have the usual large cup of-

**Heather Eastman:** Absolutely, I've got my 'H' mug. It's like the Easter egg in every single podcast. Is it there?

**Nick:** But Robb, Robb is our guest today.

**Heather:** Yes, Robb.

**Nick:** Robb with two 'B's. The second B is for [Bodybuilding.com](#), obviously.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, we can do that.

**Nick:** Or is it for big ol' quads?

**Robb Philippus:** No, it's for not being abbreviated. It's just Robb.

**Nick:** It's just Robb. He's a large powerlifter who wears small pants sometimes.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, they're pretty tight.

**Nick:** And hence his handle "Quads like Robb." You're a new athlete on Team Bodybuilding.com but not a new athlete, in general. You've been doing stuff for a really long time, seems like. You were a wrestler. You were an [MMA](#) fighter. You were a judo champion. Now pretty firmly in [powerlifting](#) or are you pretty firmly in powerlifting?

**Robb Philippus:** No, I'm staying pretty firmly in powerlifting. I'll probably retire back to the mixed martial arts or something. Something in that area.

**Nick:** That's good to know. I mean, but when we say he's pretty firmly in powerlifting, he's got some pretty incredible lifts out there. Totaled well over 2000 in competition. Squatted 959 pounds. Benched well over 500 and deadlifted 771-

**Robb Philippus:** One.

**Nick:** See he knows the numbers. So, thanks for talking with us, Robb.

**Robb Philippus:** Pleasure to be here.

**Nick:** Very interestingly, you also squatted 800 and change last week in the cage at the Arnold with a torn hamstring. Tell me how that went down.

**Robb Philippus:** Well, just training, you never know. You get to a certain weight, you never know how the training is going to go. Anything could pop anytime, warmup could be off. You could just be a little bit fatigued or not recovered from the previous workout. And I had a little pop. I felt something and a couple of days later bled out. So, two weeks later, I was supposed to squat in the cage, actually squat a grand.

**Nick:** Oh, really. Was this your first time in the cage or?

**Robb Philippus:** This would be my fourth year in the cage.

**Nick:** I thought so. I thought you've been there before, yeah.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, so my first year, just to give you a recap. My first year I squatted 905 naked-knee, with just a belt. So, in powerlifting, usually somebody wears, you'll wear sleeves, you'll wear wraps or wear something on your knees.

**Nick:** Especially up around 900 pounds. That's pretty rare. Yeah.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah. So, my second year I put on wraps to see if I could do something a little bit more exciting. I doubled 900 my second year and my third year I doubled 925.

**Nick:** That's one thing I like about the cage is it's not just like, all right, what's one weight you can handle one time you see people saying, all right, how many reps can I do with an incredible weight? It's beautiful to watch. Yeah.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah. So, I was also going to demo a new bar, so I wanted to put on something that would kind of make a wave or at least be interesting to look at. Called a grand ended up not being able to do that. I notified [Animal](#) about a week out saying, "Hey, it's not recovering. I'm not 100%. I wouldn't be able to push it. I really don't want to take up that spot or put a gap in your production," right? Make sure you guys have a good showing. And Eric Schwartz, you know, talked me through it and said like, "Hey, we really just want you to see how you feel maybe to show up and warm up. See how it goes." Which, in case you've never been to the Animal cage, it's kind of hard to shut down.

**Nick:** Ha ha, they just warm up.

**Robb Philippus:** To warm up and not go 100%, right. In any kind of competitor even yourself, you kind of had an evolution of competing, right? From one thing to another. So, it's very hard to call it quits.

**Nick:** Yeah. So, what did you do? I mean a torn hamstring is not only a painful injury, it's also one that really fundamentally alters your mechanics potentially. How did you-

**Robb Philippus:** So, it alters your mechanics. When I did pop it or feel that strain, I was a little bit wider than normal. I'm a fairly narrow squatter. A lot of times you see a big squatter, they're going to be a wide stance. They're going to take up as much of the posterior chain as they can. You'll limit that range of motion hypothetically, in the movement and get the most weight on their back. I've always been a fairly quad dominant, narrow stance squatter. So, I just exaggerated that, narrowed my stance some more. I drove my knees a little bit over the toes, probably almost out of position so I could take the load off of my hamstrings and glutes.

**Nick:** Hmm. Well, you got up to 800 and it felt good?

**Robb Philippus:** Felt good enough that I would have went nine. But one of the things, insurance policy—there is none there. So, it really wasn't worth it. It's not documented or anything, it's just for fun. It's an exhibition. So, I called it there, which was the hardest thing I've done in a while.

**Nick:** Yeah, I can imagine. Yeah, especially because, I mean you have your choice when you're preparing for a powerlifting meet. Am I the sort of person who's gonna really hype myself up, or am I the sort of person's gonna really calm myself down before I lift? I'm sure you've seen both kinds.

**Robb Philippus:** I think you have both sides of the spectrum there on the lifters, you see real high-intensity guys that got to get really amped up, whether it's anger, emotion of some sort and they visually looked amped up, or you have guys that are fairly calm and mellow, I'm definitely on the calmer side.

**Nick:** But in the cage with Animal it's not a calm and mellow place. You don't have that option.

**Robb Philippus:** I've always said, I feel like I'm just in a gym when I'm there, but there's definitely energy all around you, right? You hear it, you feel it. You can't look in any direction without somebody looking at you and cheering you on or trying to talk to you and ask what you're going for, how you feel, et cetera.

**Nick:** Sure. What's some of the cool stuff you saw there this year?

**Robb Philippus:** I didn't get to see it first hand and because I got there a day late, but there was a 900-pound pull and then he turned around, [Chris Weist](#), name I might be mispronouncing that, but he's a 23-year-old kid out in the Midwest. And so, he pulled 900 pounds.

**Nick:** 23, wow.

**Robb Philippus:** Pulled 900 pounds. And then he did something that was just kind of ludicrous. He paused 900 pounds at the knee. So, somebody would usually do that with about 60 of their 1RM and he did with, well, not 100%, I think he's pulled 930 before.

**Nick:** This is an intentional pause. It's not like, "Oh, my God, this is not coming..."

**Robb Philippus:** Nope. This was an intentional one count, almost a two count at the knee and then finishes the [deadlift](#).

**Nick:** Wow, see! Where else in the world except in a place like that. Or is that a sexy thing like, "Hey, he paused it, look and he paused it". It takes a bunch of real lifters to geek out on something like that.

**Robb Philippus:** On top of that, I'm not a deadlifter. 771, 922 or 959. So, I've always kind of respected something that you're not good at, kind of an area to improve or maybe something that you'll never be able to achieve. Right? If you've ever tried pausing anything, any kind of movement, it's harder.

**Nick:** Right.

**Heather:** Yes.

**Robb Philippus:** Dramatically. Exponentially, even.

**Nick:** So, before you were a powerlifter, you were a fighter. When I look at your old powerlifting totals, you came into the sport lifting pretty heavy. Which was your first love, were you a fighter first?

**Robb Philippus:** I think wrestling was my first sport that I really fell in love with. I played football before that I played football through high school, wrestled collegiate. There's something to be said about going to where you think you can go, the mind, and then taking your body past that point and wrestling does that almost every practice. Definitely every tournament or every hard match. So, that's probably where the drive and the ability to push yourself to those numbers I think comes from.

**Heather:** Now you said that you're really calm as a lifter. Did you have that calm mindset going into a wrestling meet or were you kind of more amping yourself up?

**Robb Philippus:** Externally, I definitely did. I was definitely calm. Internally, I always had, who doesn't have a lot of intensity or things going on in their head.

**Heather:** Kind of similar approaches to the two sports.

**Robb Philippus:** Absolutely.

**Heather:** Okay. I saw an Instagram, kind of a throwback picture of you back in the wrestling days. And it's very common for wrestlers, you're trying to make weight, so you're trying to be right at the top edge of your weight class and it's just this constant dieting down and losing strength. So, at what point did you kind of shift and go full board into powerlifting? Putting pounds not only on the bar but on your frame?

**Robb Philippus:** I've never had a problem putting weight on my frame. So, anytime I was light or thinner or leaner, whatever you want to call it, I was in starvation mode. I was 240 as a freshman in high school at 5'8".

**Nick:** That's a big freshman.

**Robb Philippus:** So, I wrestled 215 in high school as a Florida state champ, wrestling as a junior.

**Nick:** And they were terrified.

**Robb Philippus:** I don't know, I've always felt like I was on the smaller side of the weight class. There's a lot of big guys, strong guys back then. But then I would come out on top and win. So, I think I was 152 and 18 as a high school wrestler. With 99 pins. So, I was in a small school. I was able to start my freshman year so I got more matches than some. Small program, we barely filled a lineup, I was the second state champ for the school.

**Nick:** And after that? For most people, that's where their career ends is with high school. Maybe a little bit of college in that sport-

**Robb Philippus:** I wasn't really that satisfied with it. Because I took state as a junior and then didn't do anything my senior year, so I was just going to go to USF. And then, last minute, coach called me and said, "Hey, you want to come wrestle?" I was like, "Yeah. Whatever, yeah, we'll go see what's going on". And went off to Missouri site unseen and wrestled for a couple of years. I guess everyone's different. I never really thought that was a peak or a highlight. It was just something you did for entertainment or fun. Right, because of the challenge, I guess I did deeply enjoy a challenge.

**Nick:** I have two young sons now and I think I'm starting to see that mindset more and more because I grew up with just sisters. But watching boys wrestle, it's just something you do. It's not something you even think about doing. You just do it. Yeah.

So, how did you get from there into mixed martial arts, which is really, it's a different expression of that?

**Robb Philippus:** Oh, absolutely. Grappling, I mean it has a good foundation or base would be wrestling for any kind of grappling or martial arts I believe. Especially striking fighting or submission grappling. So, after wrestling though, unless you're extremely high level, you can pursue something, maybe an Olympic career, there's not a whole lot for you. Monetary, competition-wise, you don't see a lot of adult wrestling. There is adult wrestling out there. It's just going to be few and far between. Unless you're just high level. Like the senior openers and stuff like that or some open tournaments. There's open tournaments out there and...

**Nick:** But at that point it's something people are doing as an activity outside of their job. It's not pursuing...

**Robb Philippus:** Once I stopped wrestling, I didn't really have a lot of interest in continuing my education and I also, my girlfriend at the time got pregnant. So, a few life choices were made for me then. I started working, after that I would kind of miss that competitive nature or spirit, whatever you want to call it and started to pick it up in martial arts. But through that whole time, I always went to the gym. I always squatted. That was kinda like my pillow for lack of better term or stress relief or kind of my time, my quiet time would be to go to the gym and train, right. Get a good sweat in, whatever.

**Heather:** Oh, no, I was going to let you.

**Robb Philippus:** I did that for several years where I just kind of started my career and worked, but I trained that whole time.

**Nick:** Had a good record as a fighter.

**Robb Philippus:** I did. Eight and one, again that kind of died on its own. Kind of by life and just circumstance. So, I'm blind in my right eye or legally blind in my right eye. So, I couldn't fight as professional and towards the end it was kind of hard to find amateur fights without thorough eye exams. I would've went pro, you have to be 20/60 without correction before you can go pro in most sanctioning bodies or athletic commissions.

**Nick:** But you still wanted to compete?

**Robb Philippus:** Obviously. Yeah, I wanted something to do.

**Nick:** I mean, it seems like because when I look at the Open Powerlifting site, [your competition totals](#) start showing up not long after your last fights, it seems like.

**Robb Philippus:** No, I think I might've fought one last time—some guy called me out and wanted a rematch and I was like, "Oh, whatever." Good idea to take a break and get in shape and I made weight for that fight. And then after that I kind of just let myself put on natural weight again.

**Nick:** How did that feel after a decade probably or more of, alright, "I got to be controlled in my weight?" that should be like, "Finally, I can do this."

**Robb Philippus:** You know, I had already kind of gained some weight before that so I had to lose some weight. My last fight I was pretty heavy, heavier than I'd ever fought before. I shouldn't say my last fight, my fight before that I had my only loss was a pretty gnarly loss. I broke my foot, my jaw and my ... in one fight.

So, like big guys and wrestlers, I didn't learn striking first and a lot of striking's head movement and kind of deceiving or kind of diminishing power. And so, how you diminish you're going to slip a punch, you actually go towards power. Well I just didn't have that natural head movement. Wrestlers get beat up and the head butt and there's a lot of pressure. But a lot of that pressure for me learning, because I only learned as a high school wrestler, I didn't grow up wrestling. I didn't have the movement, but I was real good with power and pressure and forward progression. You go towards power, you deliver more power, right?

**Nick:** That's the football player in you.

**Robb Philippus:** Definitely right. Definitely lineman, or running back or linebacker.

**Nick:** Through something right?

**Robb Philippus:** You're going to deliver the hit to them, you're not going to take the hit.

Needless to say, when you get 260 pounds and 260 pounds and they start throwing blows at each other, those heads and bodies don't move easily. So, things break.

**Heather:** Wow.

**Nick:** Now, there are plenty of tough lifters, there are plenty of strong fighters, but you don't always see those two go hand-in-hand. How did you find they fed off of each other? Or ... did you feel like they really helped each other out at all?

**Robb Philippus:** Well, I think strength can be a good thing for anything you do.

I mean, even for me, like work environment. Once you conquer something or learn something thoroughly to where you're an expert in your own realm of just lifting, I think you're going to be more confident and more apt to succeed in what your ... the task at hand.

**Nick:** Oh, sure. I mean, and it's easy to imagine like, hey, you don't want to get hit by a guy who can bench 500 pounds. But it's not as straightforward as that either. Right?

**Robb Philippus:** No.

**Nick:** Because it's so different. It's so unilateral.

**Robb Philippus:** Bench has nothing to do with the strike. Strike comes from the hips in my opinion. Or a throw comes from the hips.

You know that you learn that in wrestling or in technique form or maybe you just have it, you know, I couldn't throw a football 50 yards, but I could dump anyone on their head, you know what I mean?

**Nick:** Do you, do you miss fighting?

**Robb Philippus:** Absolutely.

**Nick:** Yeah. How do you, how do you get your fix for that?

**Robb Philippus:** I guess the sets that I think I, in my mind, I'm not sure if I could hit them. So, those max platform, competing, I guess. That and just the, you have some days where you challenge yourself in the gym that might not be max weight, but you can still challenge yourself in other ways.

**Nick:** Right.

**Robb Philippus:** I have five hours sleep, but I still had a two-hour session that was good. Or maybe it was a rep PR or maybe it was just a solid training session.

**Heather:** Talking about training, looking through, you seem to be just squats are your comfort zone and you mentioned that you're not great at deadlifting. And I caught that number discrepancy there where it's like, wait a second, he's 200 pounds lighter on his deadlift. That's not normal. Now, in other interviews, they've kind of tried to pin you down on, well, what else do you do besides squat?



And your answer seems to be, "No, I squat, I squat, I squat."

So, if you did have to kind of go into the gym and you're doing, you know, like let's say you're working around that injury in your hamstring, like what are some other lifts that you really kind of feel fit your wheelhouse and fit your style?

**Robb Philippus:** Oh, I love pressing, you know. I'd never thought I'd bench 500 pounds and I did pretty quickly. I'm thinking of my first year of powerlifting. So, I love just training. You know, I really, I told ... All athletes or in my experience all like athletes kind of start somewhere in that bodybuilding realm. You know, whether we like it or not, whether we looked up to Ronnie Coleman, Tom Platz or Jay Cutler or whatever, however old you are. Or even like a Lee Priest or something.

**Nick:** Or Hulk Hogan or whoever, right.

**Robb Philippus:** Hulk Hogan or I liked Sting better, but I didn't really care for wrestling it was kind of traumatic for me, but we all watched it growing up, right? So, whatever magazine you read, I trained or I overtrained as a bodybuilder in high school, as much as I could.

**Heather:** And do you still sneak some of those bodybuilding lifts in, now and then?

**Robb Philippus:** Absolutely.

**Heather:** Okay-

**Nick:** Doesn't even seem like you sneak them. Like you own them, you put them on Instagram, like, hey, I'm gonna do this lateral raises here.

**Heather:** Yeah, you're sitting there doing lateral raises and daring anybody else to call you out on it.

**Robb Philippus:** Well, I mean, yeah, I love those movements. You know, who doesn't like big shoulders, right? Or width? I've never had a wide back. And I finally do. You know, I'm gonna make sure I keep it.

**Nick:** Well, yeah, it's kind of, it's health training at a certain point, too. Like everybody needs that, that broad muscular foundation.

**Robb Philippus:** Not to get to metaphorical or like ... or whatever you want to call it. But we're, our bodies were meant to move, right. We weren't meant to sit all day, you know, we were meant to sweat, you know, even the sauna has all these studies out there about how much it could extend to your life, right? And that's it.

**Nick:** Tell me about that man. I'm telling everybody around the sauna every single day around here.

**Robb Philippus:** I cut it out a long time ago because it takes such a toll on you if you're trying to cut weight and perform. I would never use a sauna to cut weight. But here recently I read some stuff and I started to... I couldn't squat as much as I wanted to like the last few weeks. And I was like, I'm just going to add sauna sessions. It helped, it helped quite a bit. I felt better, I slept better. So, there's proof in the pudding, right?

**Nick:** Yeah, well I think so. Yeah. I think you hit on something good there because a lot of people embrace things like the sauna and also hot yoga. They think, "Oh, it's going to help me lose weight."



That's not what it's for, really. It's giving you all the other benefits of cardio, all the circulation, all that sort of stuff. It's cardio without actually having to do the cardio.

**Robb Philippus:** Even the reduction of stress would be a weight management tool.

**Nick:** Right. That's all for recovery, man. If I find that I could recover so much better when I sit in the sauna four or five times a week, it's the best. See this guy, he gets it.

**Heather:** And since you kind of took it there. You know, I'm reading through and reading some of your quotes and you've quoted everyone from like Freud to Fight Club.

**Robb Philippus:** Ha, I have!

**Heather:** And a lot of your kind of mentality seems to be about both escaping, like not being controlled by your ego, but also not being controlled by society's rules. And I'm just kinda curious like how you developed your particular mentality in terms of how you approach competition?

**Robb Philippus:** I feel like I need to prep for this conversation.

**Nick:** I know, this is deep.

**Robb Philippus:** This is going to go way back. So, I really idolize my brother and he was a Marine who was in Desert Storm and you know the whole saying that "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," right? And there's a lot of like things they do to military people to make sure that they think they're invincible or make sure they can handle stressful situations. I probably say it goes back to him. And then the older I got, the more I realized like what you think will be, you know, all of these are aspects of life. And then recently into the Freud, I read "The Road Less Traveled" and I was like obsessed, like doing research on him.

**Nick:** It's a classic.

**Robb Philippus:** It was just awesome. You know? And then you know, Jordan Peter's popularity recently, there's a lot of things there, but the Fight Club in the real instinct of control.

So, like I've always said, like the only way to control something, I just posted this the other day. The only the way to truly control something is sometimes you have to relinquish total control.

So, my analogy to that would be getting on a plane. So, like the first time I flew, I was like 16. I flew alone, I went to Boston and it was, it was horrible. Horrible, right? Horrifying. You know? I've since then had to send my 14-year-old on a plane. I try and talk him through it, right? And I'm like, how do I really assess it?

So, like once you accept that in the event that you did, your fate was not to land, right. To crash. You know? And this is crazy. Like planes don't crash that often, right? Statistically. Well, once you accept that, then you actually regained control, right, of the situation. And then you can relax in control of your destiny. So, relinquishing that control to the pilot, the crew, whatever the airline, then you can be in control of yourself. That's really what you'll, the only thing you can truly control in life.

**Nick:** See, right now that that makes sense when you're on an airplane. But when you're squatting with 900 pounds on your back, it seems like it'd be harder to make that leap sometimes.

**Robb Philippus:** But is it?

**Nick:** I don't know. You tell me.

**Robb Philippus:** It's not at all. If you commit to something, then you're committing to, there's no question. So, I always, when I teach squatting, I don't know why people get so bent out of shape about having the weight on them.

**Nick:** Right.

**Robb Philippus:** Usually I would, well, either way, when I teach squatting and you know, I try and preach and communicate that we commit to anything that we do. Whether I'm going to write a paper or whether I'm going to squat something to depth, I'm going to put a new max on my back. If we committed to it, then we have nothing to walk away with shame or disappointment or guilt or any of those things because we gave it everything. And that's a really hard thing to do if you've never done it, right.

But every chance you get that, that you try harder to commit to it completely knowing you gave everything. Like even for me, that's hard to do. I'm not gonna lie, but when you do that, you can actually possibly succeed or at least eliminate all the obstacles that would prevent you from succeeding.

**Nick:** Hmm. So, is that how you went from a 766 squat to a 960-pound squad? Is that, is that all it is, is just that shift?

**Robb Philippus:** No, that was following a program. I'd never followed a program until I powerlifted.

**Nick:** You could, so you squatting 760 without ever having followed a program?

**Robb Philippus:** I ran two cycles of Brandon Lilly's, like, cookie cutter program, which essentially made me train less is what it did. 'Cause every third week you push a lift hard, it was called the [Cube Method](#). It was actually very simple, rudimentary, but it worked. Right. And it kept you lifting fresh. Right.

So, I was a five day a week guy, six days or whatever I wanted. If I felt good that day I was going to go push the bar, you know, I'd bench three times a week, whatever. Well, that made me de-train some and able to push the lifts and kind of make the lifts count when I did them. Which I had done in other aspects like wrestling or competing or fighting where you take rest periods of up to weeks so you're fresh and you have nothing hurting. It makes sense, right? You go in there again, you have no fear in the back of your head. All this, this knee bothers me or this wrist hurts. You know, you go out there, you give it your all and again you have no obstacles preventing you from winning. Right. Performing.

Same token, being able to do that from a lifting standpoint—actually resting where I was able to push my lifting days that mattered heavier so then I was fresh every time I lifted big.

**Nick:** Were you somebody in the past who was a guilty of chasing a heavy single too often you think?

**Robb Philippus:** I hate the ego. I'm not a very ego driven person. You know, anytime you go on the gym for ego, I mean obviously I would get to like that 45-minute, hour and a half mark and I start feeling really good and start pushing weights. But I wasn't doing those on main lifts. You know, I did

the main lifts just to challenge myself. I wasn't looking around and see who was watching. I was in the corner with my headphones on with nobody there, you know, by myself. Yeah.

Every time you, I always thought, I always say leave the ego at the door and you'll be better for it. Right. Just be honest with yourself. Look yourself in the mirror. Did I really do good today? Did I really hit depth?

I think that's the only thing that really made me different and stand out. When I first started this, I was already squatting 675 for a triple to a 12-inch box and I was doing that with a bodybuilding buddy, you know. But I just made sure I did some box so I made sure I hit depth so I didn't have any question. I wasn't filming it at that point. You know, but I knew that I touched the box. I knew I was at depth.

So, doing that, did two things: it made me squat it down, whether I had a box or not. Then also made me control my descent, which increased the load and time under tension of the descent, which breaks down more muscle. I didn't know that then, but hindsight that made my quads and squat bigger. Right. So, I didn't deadlift until that first time I ran that program, too. So, 31 was the first time I deadlifted.

**Nick:** So, you were just squatting and I was it.

**Robb Philippus:** Just squatting, pushing. In high school, I weight lifted, but it was clean and jerk and bench. You know, so clean and jerk and bench doesn't have any, I mean it's explosive movements, they're fast movements, but they don't have anything to do with deadlift form. You know, I didn't know how to lock in my back. I mean, I know, I really didn't. I didn't know how to deadlift until much later in life.

**Nick:** Hmm. So, now one thing that I like about what I've seen of your posts on social media is you don't just, you don't just post the PRs, you post a lot of, not even rep PRs but just reps and you do high-rep work, you know, you go on his Instagram, you can see you sitting on the back with your feet in the air doing dumbbell bench presses for high reps. And I was wondering, you know, what do high reps do for you as a strength athlete and how do you use high reps to build strength?

**Robb Philippus:** So, there shouldn't be a whole lot of high reps on there. But there is, you know, it might seem high because it's sets of 10 or I'd use AMRAPs every once in a while, just real quick to cover them. Like my posts, like I've always just posted ... that started as a training log. I tried to keep it true to just a training log. And a lot of people, like I used to get feedback all the time. I was like, "Oh, I love how you didn't sell out. You just post your training."

And you know, now I post more life stuff too in there, but you know, I kind of kept it as simply my training log and a lot of people, even my ex-wife once said, it's like, why do you post so much? Like it's just my training log. I don't really think about it, I just post my facts. If they want to look at it, they can, if they don't, they can scroll on. You know, back to the high reps, AMRAPs are just a good way of pushing yourself. So, if you hit like a heavy double, triple whatever on a movement, I like to drop by like 10, 15, 20, 30% and do an AMRAP. It could be a good gauge of progress, is what I use it for.

**Nick:** Okay. Okay. So, yeah, another way of-

**Robb Philippus:** And right now, like I also work with a coach, who is [Josh Bryant](#), and I haven't before that.

**Nick:** Josh is great.

**Robb Philippus:** Josh is a phenomenal guy, right? He's done it. He's got a lot of knowledge and actual education to back it up now. And he's done the thing. So, I've always been, you know, I always respected somebody that's been there and done it, you know, they don't always make the best coaches, but a lot of times they, you get them talking, you can learn things from them and their own experiences. Right. And he's an expert.

**Nick:** And he's a great talker.

**Robb Philippus:** And he asks me, right. Any subject matter expert can once you get them opened up, whether they are a good coach or not, they can still, you can still learn from them. Actually, you can learn from anyone we talk to. But you could still learn something from them. So, he covers both sides. He's smart, he's done it and he continues to learn.

**Nick:** Sure. Yeah. He's been a long-time contributor to Bodybuilding.com even pretty much every other, this-

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, I talked to him this morning a little bit. He's like, "Yeah, I've written like 40 articles for them." I was like, that's awesome. He's like, there are great people, they're cool cats.

**Nick:** I'd love to have him on the podcast at some point, too, because he's an interesting guy. He has a lot of historical knowledge about strength sports. Like, he's a real scholar in his own way, right?

**Robb Philippus:** An historian.

**Nick:** Yeah. Yeah. But, also, he's a guy who, he works with bodybuilders, he works with powerlifters, and he kind of seems to get that it's all part of the same expression. It's not like these are just different teams-

**Robb Philippus:** Individual style is working ... by themselves.

**Heather:** There's a lot of crossover, for sure. You, yourself, said that you were basically working out with a bodybuilder and working out as a bodybuilder when you were squatting 600 pounds initially.

**Robb Philippus:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Nick:** I wanted to ask you just a little bit more. You alluded to it a little bit about the mental space that you kind of get into for a really big lift for, say, you're going to squat 900 pounds, something like that. I wanted you to walk us through what that's like. Because it's easy for us to imagine, okay, you have 10 minutes until you're going to get under the bar. You know that's going to happen and somebody would be sitting there. Maybe they're nervous, maybe they're just trying to calm them self down, maybe they're trying to amp them self up, what does that 10 minutes look like for you? What are you doing? What's your ritual, I guess?

**Robb Philippus:** I'm glad you said ritual. Any personality out there, people argue that they're either ADD or they're OCD. With the ritual or routine with lifting, you need to make sure that you duplicate the process. If it's repetitive and you do it well enough every time you train, then you'll be able to do it under high-stress situations without actually thinking. Not to digress so much, but back to wrestling really quick... My dad, the other day at the Arnold, his second time he ever came to watch me lift, just... I don't know why it's that way, but he's never really seen me compete or lift. Well, he made it out and he watched me.

Well, we're out there, my kids and my girlfriend and we were just joking around and just talking and carrying on or whatever. And he started telling a story about how I used to wrestle one time and I don't remember this story but it rings a bell that he said it. I had come off the mat angry and disappointed and I won. And he'd try and talk to me and ask me, "What are you talking about son, you did great. It was phenomenal." He didn't have a chance or you outscored them or whatever you pinned him. I was like I had to think twice about what I did.

In wrestling, if you have to think back then I knew it and now in lifting if you think during anything that you do you're going to be slower and you're not going to execute. It needs to be something that's engraved to you to the 1,000, 2,000 rep range, where it's instinctual. So, every time I touch the bar, my routine is going to be within 90% the same thing. Whether it's 135 or 315, 3 plates or 900, my ritual looks the same.

**Heather:** When you mentioned your brother is inspiration for kind of that mentality and that's a very military approach where you've just drilled it so many times that you don't have to think when something triggers you, just go and you do it. So, it sounds like a very similar kind of mentality of just do it, do it, do it, until the point where you don't even have to think it, it just happens.

**Robb Philippus:** Right. If you're thinking, you're going to actually get slower and you're going to introduce self-doubt. You're going to build the anxiety and stress. When it comes to strength, you don't have time for that. You really can't think at all.

So, to answer your question, I look the same that I would in the gym and I'm going to be very calm and anybody could walk up to me and talk to me.

**Nick:** So, you're not sitting there, headphones on, or do you find a quiet space?

**Robb Philippus:** I wear headphones and I kind of... I didn't wear them for a long time. I want to kind of get away from them again because I don't use them to warmup in the warmup room and I don't use them to compete. The same is like, everything should be mimicked. I don't look in a mirror when I compete. I try to duplicate that the way you compete. Practice how you compete. Practice how you play, whatever you want to call it. I'm not going to be looking in a mirror, I'm going to be looking out into open space or open gym or into a crowd or whatever.

You're not going to have headphones on. You're not going to be able to get that amped up or *I'm*not able to get to that amped-up state. Maybe I lack intensity at some point or I appear to externally. But, no, I'm going to be calm and docile.

**Nick:** Is that why you have the nickname Buddha?

**Robb Philippus:** No, that's actually funny. That's Bruddy. Bruddy is my oldest brother. He's who I idolize because he was kind of gone. He's much older than me. I lived with him in high school quite a bit. But yes, when I was a football player in high school, I think I played a couple of games. I played the season of JV and I bumped up to varsity my freshman year. 5'8, 240, that's a pretty short stature for 240. I had a Buddha belly, so...

**Nick:** So, it's a physical comparison.

**Robb Philippus:** It was a physical nickname, yeah.

**Nick:** It's fitting in its own way, though.

**Robb Philippus:** Very much so. He has a philosophy degree and he's definitely a thinker. I get a lot of that from him. He always asked why or I'd say something like I really lucked out with my kids you know what are you talking about, that's ridiculous. Your kids are that way because you're their father. He always would straighten me right out.

**Heather:** You mentioned that your posts have become more and more about your life and I noticed a lot of family. We've mentioned your family several times and one post really stuck out to me. You talked about saying that having kids lift is as asinine as saying the earth is flat. Or not having kids lift like it's going to hurt them. We kind of encounter that a lot with people are constantly asking, "How can I get my kid lifting?" Right now, the prevailing wisdom in the medical community is, no, don't lift, it's going to hurt them.

So, tell me a little bit about kind of your approach with that. Because both of your kids are, they're very athletic.

**Robb Philippus:** They're athletic.

**Heather:** They're wrestlers.

**Robb Philippus:** As soon as my daughter shows any interest, we're going to have her lifting. She's squatted with a dowel or a broomstick before or a PVC pipe but she hasn't touched any weight yet because she's just not interested. I don't want to push her too hard.

**Nick:** She's a wrestler, though.

**Robb Philippus:** She's a wrestler. She's super strong. She's got my legs. She's got nice, solid legs. She's going to be able to do what she wants when she starts doing it.

**Heather:** She literally has quads like Robb.

**Robb Philippus:** She really does. She's got really solid knees. She's built. She's going to be a solid little girl or she already is.

So, back to your question, so statistically, if you do any research, I think "[Starting Strength](#)" and [Mark Rippetoe](#) posted in his book that statistically you're more likely to go get hurt on a soccer field. Ironically, I coached my son never playing [soccer](#), I coached him when he was like five years old, I think, or itty bitty just way too little, maybe six. Whatever the case, maybe I coached. These kids you can't get them to run the same direction.

And then they're trying to kick a ball. Well, statistically, there's more injuries obviously per capita there's going to be more players but there's more injuries playing soccer than there is doing a two-dimensional movement of a lift. So, if there under good supervision, and maybe you can teach them how to use a brace maybe just don't push weight initially until they get the form down which is logical. The logical thing to do is make sure they're doing it correctly. They have the movement down.

I just think back to the doctors saying no. Well, if I go talk to a doctor about what I do... I've also had a couple of injuries and had things repaired and they're like, no. You're doing what? At 13 weeks, I deadlifted after tearing my bicep and he was like, I can't just believe that. So, doctors, whether they're groomed by maybe the text or the instruction, the teaching whatever is there, but I think some of it is also is driven by our society and just the liability side of it. Obviously, that's going to be some of that issue.

**Nick:** The lesson is find a doctor who lifts.

**Heather:** Well, it's a-

**Robb Philippus:** Find a doctor who lifts but a lot times they still don't lift heavy. They do it for a health benefit.

**Heather:** Right, right.

**Robb Philippus:** There's very few and far between... I had chiropractor that did lift and he was phenomenal. He could adjust me when nobody could. But he was my size. Yeah, so find a doctor that lifts, find one that's open minded or that actually cares to listen and understand what you do. Or has experience in it.

**Heather:** Yeah, I mean for sure like you could cause damage to the epiphyseal plates before they're done growing if you were lifting super, super heavy. But just the notion that kids can't lift or can't be active. And to your point, we were talking about this the other day that female soccer players are the highest percentage of knee injuries just because the nature of the sport.

**Nick:** Oh, it's terrible.

**Heather:** And the way that they're growing at that time. It's like this perfect combination of injury.

**Robb Philippus:** Cutting and turning.

**Nick:** And it's kind of sad once you become somebody who really enjoys lifting to feel like it's not something that you can share with your kids, too, because I have my little garage gym set up. My three-year-old and my seven-year-old, man, they want in. They want in.

**Robb Philippus:** There's so many things to touch.

**Nick:** Exactly. It's a playground. I don't want to tell them no. They can set appropriate limits for these sorts of things.

**Heather:** I train out of a CrossFit box. They bring their kids and they're hanging off the bars. And they've got that crazy kid strength where they can do anything.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, the pound to weight ratio.

**Nick:** Right. Now, I was curious about how much you train now because you mention okay when you were following the Cube Method, you slimmed it down quite a bit, the actual training that you-

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, I think it might have been three days with one accessory day. I'm still on the four-day, five-day mark. My planning is four days. If I work too long, if I have a 13, 14-hour day, maybe I have to cut it into two. But most time, I'll try and bang it out in one session. Sometimes I stretch it like two, three hours or three and half hours at the gym, it's a bit much. But four days is pretty standard right now.

**Nick:** Are you preparing for another competition?



**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, I have something... Next competition I should do as long as everything stays healthy it will be [Boss of Bosses](#).

**Nick:** Which is classic. Right.

**Robb Philippus:** August. I supported them. The only one I missed was the first and the fifth. [I've done it](#) three times. But I've been to all of them but the first. To support [Dan](#) and [Sparkle](#) [Green]. They're good people.

**Nick:** Sure.

**Robb Philippus:** It's a fun meet and they try to make a production of it and it's good for the sport.

**Nick:** Sure. How much more or... What goals competitively or in the gym do you feel like you, I still got to do this?

**Robb Philippus:** You know, I haven't totaled 2200 raw in sleeves. So, I'm really known as a sleeve squatter or a bare-knee squatter more than my wraps. A lot of times wraps will give you about 100 pounds and I get like virtually 30, 40 pounds out of them, if that. I would like a total of 2200 raw in sleeves and I really want to improve my record. A sub-one point—you know, this hammy's a little frustrating—but at one point, I want to try and be the lightest guy to squat 1,000.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Robb Philippus:** You know, I think that would be kind of cool.

**Nick:** Yeah, seems like the sort of thing that would work well at the Arnold.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, well, I mean, it wouldn't count. So, I'd have to do it on a platform, but yes, it would have been a good run, good practice. I would like to do that around 300 pounds or even lighter. There are a lot of guys out there that are in the nines or not a lot. There's a couple of guys out there in the nines that are really good. [Dennis Cornelius](#) is one of them. He's a good guy. We competed together before and he squats in the nines but to squat like a grand in sleeves would just be insane.

**Nick:** Well, thank you so much for coming and talking with us Robb.

**Heather:** Yes, thank you.

**Nick:** How do people find you out there?

**Robb Philippus:** They can reach me on... [Instagram](#) is probably the best. I've got a [YouTube channel](#) but it's small right now. Hopefully, now I'll start growing that and putting more content out there on YouTube.

**Nick:** Yeah, he's out there on Instagram wearing the BBcom swole shirt. I like it.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, I am. And Google. My name's so unique, Philippus, there's only one Robb Philippus out there.

**Nick:** But what you'll find is his [old fights](#), too.

**Heather:** Yes.

**Robb Philippus:** Yeah, they will. Well, it's like Robb happens if you just search Robb, it'll probably come up, too.

**Nick Collias:** Great, Robb Philippus, thank you so much for talking with us, buddy.

**Robb Philippus:** Yes.

**Heather Eastman:** Thank you.



## [12 EXERCISES FOR BIGGER POWERLIFTS](#)

The options are endless when it comes to choosing accessory movements and variations in training for competitive powerlifting. We turned to Team Bodybuilding.com members and veterans in the sport to find out what they think we should be doing for building a bigger total.