"No Protein Powders!" - Torre Washington On His Vegan Bodybuilding Nutrition Philosophy Transcript

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Introduction and Torre Washington's Vegan Journey

Hey everyone, this is Klaus from the Vegan Podcast. Welcome to the show and with Sarah. >> Hi. >> And Shabnam. >> Hi everyone. >> Today we're going to be talking about Torre Washington, a vegan bodybuilder who said he doesn't consume protein powders.

>> That's why when I look at those pictures to now, I'm like, man, I am [music] so much bigger now because nutrition changed. I was able to do very well doing about 50 to 100 grams of protein. Now I'm up to like 190, which I do see a difference because I was always shredded but I never was really full, but I had such a great structure, my genetics, my had an elite athletes look. So I could get away with just being super lean and [music] getting on stage and they're like, man, this guy looks amazing. And if he could just be a little bigger.

That's what I would get all the time, but they were associated with maybe need to eat some meat. They didn't understand that I just didn't understand the concept of carb loading. You know, bringing up the carbs in order to fill out the muscle bellies and to fill out the muscle cells, which, you know, when you do carbs and water, it brings in a little water to make the muscle look more full. I didn't understand [music] that concept, so I didn't know that at the time. That's why when I look at those pictures to now, I'm like, man, I am so [music] much bigger now because nutrition changed.

>> He's been a vegan for over 25 years. Turned fully plant-based, fully vegan 1998. It's incredible. >> He is an impressive specimen. >> He also recently qualified for the Mr. Olympia 2026 competition and is all natural. >> And to confirm, he's 51 years old. Like he is like inspiration for all the people who think you cannot build muscle on a plant-based diet cuz look at him and he's 51 and vegan for 25 years. You know the excuse that people always use is, yeah, but they were only vegan for a few years. Wait to see him in 10 years. No, he's been vegan that whole time.

Natural Bodybuilding and Protein Sources

>> I'm trying to think what they'll say now. They'll be like, ah, he's probably on steroids, he's lying. >> Are you natty? Yeah, you see these natty dreadlocks, man. For most of you that may not know what natty means, natty in the bodybuilding arena is meaning are you natural? Do you take any synthetic substances like Peds or um Um, antibiotics, steroids, human growth hormone, these different things that you use to make yourself look bigger than you are. No, I don't. I never even thought of taking those things. But to this day, I still get accused of taking it, which to me is a compliment. That means my hard work is paying off, man, and it's cuz I'm rethinking protein and all these plants in my body. >> What are some of those protein-dense sources that you would go to to hit those macros, to put on the size you wanted to put on, and eventually [music] again, winning, you know, most recently? So, what what were some of those foods?

>> So, when I started out, like I said, I was I was doing the tofu only, and then I would add in texturized vegetable [music] protein, which is called TVP, which is which is also soy protein. And >> [music] >> then eventually, I ended up doing protein powders, hemp protein, soy protein, pea protein. So, it turned out to be my way to add an extra protein. And then once [music] seitan became popular, seitan is just vital wheat gluten. It is way more protein than it is carbohydrates, but it has zero fat. And so, I started utilizing that. And then, fast forward to now, there's another protein source called fava bean protein. With that, it makes it so much easier now to not actually have to do protein powders. You know, but I still do them every once in a while to make sure that I'm getting it if I'm not able to eat.

But I would rather prefer eating. >> I got a question for you, Shogun, because you are a very qualified exercise physiologist. I got a theory that when it comes to muscle mass and people like looking strong, there's this overemphasis on protein, when actually a really big component of getting that filled-out look, which Tory

Washington touched on, was like carbing up. What's your take on that? Is that being underhyped and protein is being overhyped? >> It's funny that you ask, because anybody who's ever competed in a figure bodybuilding competition. I actually did compete back in 2009. I won Miss Muscle Beach Yeah. >> You are very qualified for this discussion. >> That was the key. That's the key factor is carbohydrates to look full, lots of raisins and fast digesting carbohydrates on stage with a quick pump of doing some push-ups and some pull-ups can make you look really full. >> That's the science, right? Carbs aren't the enemy, my friend.

Carbs, Calorie Timing, and Stage Conditioning

To this day, a lot of us know that carbs are what gives you energy to get your workout done, to get through your day. Calories. Calories are a measure of energy. And you get calories [music] from fats, proteins, carbs. Those things you need in order to provide you with ample energy to push you through your workout. Carbohydrates are one of your major sources of energy that your body goes to first in order to get the energy you need to drive you through that workout. Without the carb, you're not going to burn the fat. What I mean by that? Without the carb, you're not going to get the energy to do the workout, to run on a treadmill, to run outside, to do your pull-ups, to do whatever it is that you do that you find active. Without the carb, you're not going to get the energy to fulfill you for that training session, right? So, I utilize carbs as calorie. I don't look at them as carbs. I don't look at them as protein. I don't look at them as fat.

I look at them as measures of energy, basically calories. How many calories I take in versus how many calories I burn. That in and of itself helped me to stay lean. So, what I do is let's say I start off at 3,000 calories and I'm getting ready for a competition, I will slowly bring my calorie content down so that way, as I'm getting closer to the show, I'm getting as lean as I need to be. And it's all on calories. Carbs are your friend. Because if you look at the animal kingdom, the carnivores that eat meat, it goes through their system very quickly because they have a small intestinal tract. We [music] have a long intestinal tract. So, those carbohydrates refuel and regenerate and build, and do things for our body that are amazing.

Give it a shot. >> When we think about nutrient profile, we're thinking of carbohydrates taking anywhere between 45% to 65% of our daily nutrient intake, and protein being anywhere between 10% to 35%. And that's a big wide range, 10% to 35%. But, it really is dependent upon the activity, the intensity, how often you're doing activity per day. So, there are multiple variables, and your age, that's a big precursor. But, really, carbs give you that look. >> Carbs in response to adequate training.

And so, let me be very specific. It's not exactly just carbohydrates, it's nutrient timing as well. How much carbs are we having, and when are we having them in response to when we are exercising, and when we are done exercising. In my experience, when you're doing a basic resistance training program, you should be having a 3:1 ratio of carbohydrate to protein intake every 15 minutes. So, you're thinking about about 15 g of carbohydrates every 15 minutes, like a bolus. So, you're making a protein shake, you're drinking that while you're exercising. And then, once you've completed your workout, you also consume more carbohydrates and protein to make up for that nitrogen balance. >> As you get closer to a show, you going to take what's called a calorie deficit, and this calorie deficit can take away from your look. Because you're lowering your calories. And as you lower your calories, the body's looking for a way to get energy, and it can then go and zap your muscles for that energy. So, we increase the protein intake to minimize the muscle loss. Which we still get muscle loss, but not as much.

>> Okay. And like, top three sources of protein? >> Probably being tofu, seitan, which you're going to have to as well, and tofu. Then you have, you know, when you want to on the other side doing protein shakes, if you want to do that. Chickpeas, I mean beans, even though I know people say beans aren't a protein source, they are. They have protein.

Protein Needs for Athletes vs. General Health

Just because they have more carbs doesn't mean it's still not a protein source. >> Yeah. >> But that's what they tend to tout now a lot in social media. Oh, it's not a protein source. It still has protein, so it is a source of protein. >> He did say something interesting like fava bean, because fava beans whole like one cup cooked that has like almost 40 g of protein. It has double the amount of carbohydrates.

>> I've heard other people talk about fava bean, how it's really good for protein. Lots of people been raving about this. I really want to try it. >> You know, often times when we think about what's happening, when we think about protein, we forget that protein really compromises 5% of the energy burned during exercise. So, maintaining a positive nitrogen balance is just as needed through raw material ingestion for these anabolic processes to occur.

So, people often wait to consume after workout, but you'll notice the greatest bodybuilders and performers are consistently fueling. >> But let's say you're not trying to be a bodybuilder, because I know a lot of people watching this won't want to be a bodybuilder. They might just want to get lean potentially. What would you recommend then?

>> Same exact thing. Less caloric intake throughout your day, but you're you're still looking of that three to one carbohydrate to protein ingestion every 15 minutes over the course of your activity, and based off of how much you weigh and your end goal, whatever that may be.

>> It will depend on your kcal intake for the day and then will determine what your AMDRs, your adequate micronutrient profile should be. So, really depending on the goals, it makes me determine what percentage of carbohydrate should come out of your 2,000 kcal diet. What percent should come for protein and what percent should come from fat. And that entire pie needs to hit 100%. So, if I'm giving a range of anywhere 10 to 35% of my calories coming from protein, 45 to 65 coming from carbohydrates. Then I need to find that other variation that fits of how many grams of fat will allocate to the diet. So, it is science and it's trial and error. The thing is fueling [snorts] more often helps people meet their goals. >> And do I drink shakes? I'm not a shake person. I haven't been. I uh protein shakes wasn't something I found very important. Not to say that you don't have to drink protein shakes. You can. That's a preference of yours.

Preference My preference is no. I don't drink them. I don't need it. I don't need so much protein going into my body. I think I get enough protein for my body by my caloric intake for the day. >> I wonder if he's the only vegan bodybuilder that level not consuming protein powders.

>> To be honest, I don't know how he does. I think the problem becomes when you get to competition, you're just so tired of eating. It's just so much food. The quantity is immense because the exercise program training is intense. So, you have to consistently fuel to see those gains, right? Those hypertrophic gains.

>> A lot of people genuinely think that if you are bodybuilding as a vegan, you either need to just have an insatiable desire and intentions of getting loads and loads and loads of protein in all the time or consume protein powders.

Personally, I think it's a little bit overhyped. That's my sense. Based on the fact that when we're like breastfeeding, protein in the mother's milk is only like single digits in protein and that's when we grow the most. Based on like the Okinawa ones who are strong and healthy, obviously not bodybuilders, but like they're long living, right? Very, very healthy. Heart disease rates are like eight times lower than Americans at the same age. 69% of their calories were from sweet potatoes. A very small amount of from fat and protein. Now, obviously they're not standing on stage at bodybuilding competition, but I worry that this protein-centric message is being received by people that are not actually going on the bodybuilding stage. They just want to get healthy.

And in order to get healthy, you don't need all of this protein. >> That's why we get such a wide range, anywhere between 0.8 g to 1.

Complete Proteins, Appetite, and Closing Thoughts

6 g per kilo body weight, even upwards of 2 g per kilo body weight. That's depending upon, again, exercise intensity, age range, a multitude of factors that would require somebody to have that copious amount. And I'm talking about like ultra-distance marathon runners, okay? People that are in need of equating that nitrogen balance by eating more protein, lots of beans. They can replenish all of that. Really, you don't need that much. An average we can see anywhere around 0.8 g to 1.2 g per kilo body weight being adequate for performance. And so, I think what we conflate with average daily needs with high-performing athletics. The biggest thing is taking a look at the population that you're serving. For example, LeBron, 41, playing in the NBA.

>> I am also in my 40s, and I do not play in the NBA. The relative ability of what someone can do versus the absolute value of our age, totally different. Make sense? So, what that person needs at that age, at that athletic level, is completely different than someone else of his age, his height, maybe not of his athletic level. I think often times we just monkey see, monkey do. That's what that person's doing, I'm going to do it. But we need to see it in terms of the context of the entire situation. >> In the past, it was considered that the only way to get a complete protein from a vegan lifestyle was to have your aminos balanced with another one that that one was missing. What I mean is, for example, let's say you have black beans. Black beans might have a certain amount of aminos, and then the brown rice has a certain amount of aminos that the black beans is lacking. So, those together, you combine it, now you have a complete protein. New research and understanding is >> [music] >> that the body is designed in such an amazing way that when you eat these beans or whatever and those amino that you get from it, the body stores it until you eat something else that fills it in and now you have your complete protein. So you don't necessarily need to be concerned about eating a complete protein at the time that you're sitting down to eating. Just eat a variety of foods, get the calories you need for the day, bam, you have it.

>> I think the internet sometimes doesn't help when you see all these like fitness influencers and like all this chat about protein. Like what you were saying, Cass, protein has become so loud in the conversation. You're not actually thinking about what it is you need it for.

>> Protein deficiency is not what is plaguing our countries globally, our global health issue. >> Yeah, I almost feel like if you need to put on muscle, then your appetite will increase because you're exercising more by virtue of the fact that you need to put on muscle. So generally speaking, if you eat balanced, healthful diet replete with healthy plant protein, fruits and vegetables, you'll get enough protein because if you need to gain muscle, you'll be doing exercise. That means your appetite will increase. So I think it's over hyped. And also, like I I I think to what I feel best eating, it's fruits and rice and beans. All the other stuff, oh, you need this, you need that, have you had this? That is just it's it might be true, but I think it's leverage and you use a bit of fear most of the time. Thank you everybody for watching another episode of Plant Based News. Please like, comment and subscribe and we'll see you very soon.

>> [music]