Introduction and athlete background

Well, everybody, and you'll be really excited to spend the next half an hour with me, but more excited to spend it with dad to bash. We have an her on this summit before, but I've had the pleasure to be on her podcast.

We'll talk about that in a little bit because she has a great foundation and a great podcast. Everybody should go over to iTunes or Spotify and make it a part of your regular listening.

So thank you so much. You're beaming in from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. You've got all that sunshine streaming in, and behind me is just dark and gloomy.

Michigan. So you're smarter than me for sure. I guess. Apparently I am. Yeah, you're a little more radiant than me too, but, at least, and then you spend, part of the year in Southern California.

But, you're pretty famous for being a amazing athlete and an Olympic athlete. And then also, plant based athlete, which, fits in this summit perfectly with how do you maintain a healthy body and, in the process, probably maintain a very healthy heart.

So why don't you give the audience? Because not everybody knows who you are, and, I let's get them to know you give us a little brief summary of your athletic career, your, you know, competitive career.

Yes. I raced for, for 14 years, but I started a little late, so, you you missed old oldest athlete, to to, don the the the Olympic podium in my sport.

Is that, you know, everybody what your sport was. Yeah. So I competed in London 2012, in, track cycling. So anybody from Europe, they know exactly what that is.

Or Australia, New Zealand, the states. It's not as popular as road cycling is, but it's, it's on the 45 degree banked, velodrome. So it's very exciting where our bikes have no brakes and one gear, so you can't shift and you can't break.

And I think a lot of us saw game changers who were featured in Game Changers. Right? Yes. I'm the, I'm the cyclist in Game Changers. Yeah, right. So a lot of us can remember what it is to be, that version of cycling and.

All right. And you even have Topps trading cards with your picture on it. That is true. Yes. I don't I don't. I don't really gotta get you one. Yeah. Those still come in the mail from people all over the world.

It's wild. And they just. Yeah, I didn't even realize that it was happening until right before Olympics in there. Like, we had these making you sign like a hundred of them.

Track cycling career and Olympic record

Go, I would have. Okay, sure. I didn't have anything to do with what it says on there or what picture they used or anything, but, yeah, I don't know. People love the trading cards as we know.

Yeah. I like to remember as a kid is opening them up mainly get that piece of bubblegum, but I they put it in there anymore. So, And it's probably not what you're doing, sugar.

Bubblegum. But have you been athletic? You look like you're 29. If you've been athletic your whole life. Not really. No. I mean, I grew up in Kentucky, and so I grew up saddle bred, horseback riding.

But in my opinion, the horse is the athlete in that relationship. Not the, not the rider. So I did grow up, a competitor, but but not necessarily, you know, a high end athlete at all.

And, I, I found cycling, as a, as a part of my healing, you know, this healing vehicle really from coming back from anorexia. Just kind of odd and, and maybe not as typical as some starting cycling, you know, when they're 5 or 15 or whatever it might be.

But I fell in love with the sport really hard and fast and, Yeah, just I just I just kept after it and then started racing and, you know, like I said, 14 years later, never would have thought in a million years.

I was just trying to get, well, and, ended up at the Olympics. And, about what age period was the anorexia most, you know, impactful on your. Health, early 20s, early 20s, right after year, the last year of college, and, into three years after that.

So it was about four years total. And about maybe it mentioned by by what age did you begin the bike racing? 26. 28. Age 20. Six. Yes. Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

And where, you know, you hold off. Correct me if I'm wrong. I think you hold an Olympic. You hold a world record, right? It has been broken. Now that bummer.

But yes we did. The US held the world record. We broke it in Aguascalientes, Mexico. And it's held for not even six months. And then the British broke it.

And then in the Olympics in 2012, we we set the world record in 2010 and, in, in the Olympics, it was obviously in Great Britain and the British won the gold and they broke the world record every single ride to the finals.

So in qualifying semifinals and finals. So, they still hold it, believe it or not, you. Had at one point a pretty successful personal coaching business, I think mainly for women, is that still exist?

It does not. Now. I coached in cycling quite, quite a long time throughout throughout my later years of of racing and competing and, and a few years after.

But then I switched passions, I switched careers, so I'm no longer coaching. Okay. Yeah. Where along the way and how in the heck did Plant-Based nutrition come into this super athlete's life?

Right?

Plant-based transition and performance gains

Yes, because I mentioned I grew up in Kentucky, so I grew up eating every animal you can think of. There is not a meal that there wasn't an animal on my plate in the Ate that way for 30, for 35 years.

And I just, I just had a moment in time. I was at a race in Minnesota. It was the middle of the night. I couldn't sleep, which happens often in the middle of a stage race.

I was, professional road racer at the time. Before I had started racing the track. And I was digging down the the trolls of the internet, and I just came across some footage of what goes on an animal agriculture like behind the scenes, right behind the closed doors, behind what they don't show us.

And I just had a I only can describe it as just a soul shift because I grew up loving animals. Maybe you might have guessed that the fact that I was, I had horses and, but I also had bunnies and gerbils and rabbits and dogs and I just was like, wait a minute, it's the same.

What am I doing? Putting them in my mouth? And and so I just, I was two years, a little over two years out from the Olympic Games, had made the Olympic team yet was in the running for sure, but hadn't made the team yet.

And I just, I made it just a complete 180 to every everything that was on my plate. Now, I will say I was a big fan of fruits and vegetables and, nuts and seeds and grains.

Not so much legumes. Those were not really in there yet, but all the other good stuff. I mean, you know, it's like we had gotten the memo that, you know, nutrients, high nutrient diet was important for for athletics, and to win medals.

But I so I it was it was a strange transition I'll call it because no one was doing it alongside me. None of my teammates, nobody at the Olympic Training Center that I knew at the time was eating plant based.

So I kind of had to go it alone and figure it out. But, yeah, I did it. And I just, you know, I just remember thinking to myself, Doctor Khan, like, please, just whoever's listening out there in the ethos just let me stay the same.

I just wanted to have the same strength and the same endurance and the same recovery that I had. Because I knew if it got if it if it got worse, you know, I was no spring chicken.

So, you know, there's there's ten and 20 years my junior going after my Olympic spot. And so I had to I had to at least be as good as I was. But wow. Mind blown.

I had no idea that I was going to get so much better, so much stronger. That's what was really shocking for me. I didn't think I was going to be able to gain muscle mass necessarily on a plant based diet I was just hoping to maintain.

So, yeah. That's really inspiring. And yeah, I mean, you probably don't compete now like you did ten years ago, but just share with us because people want to know, you know, granular data.

What is it? Breakfast. A typical breakfast in your life look like? Yes. I am the only athlete on planet Earth that does not like oatmeal. I am like, I just need to really satiate eating fairly high protein.

Somewhat high fat breakfast in in the form of, avocados was always my thing. So I would do like a real rich tofu scramble with turmeric and cumin and oregano and nutritional yeast.

And I would always. I'm a big, Mexican food fan, as you might have guessed. One of the reasons we moved here. So, you know, homemade salsa, tomatillos on top with a grainy, bread underneath and sliced avocado.

I like coffee, so that was also involved, but, yeah, protein rich would really stick to my ribs for at least. Having that breakfast with you that is making my mouth water. Yes.

And what might a lunch be? So. Well, you forgot the meal in between breakfast and lunch, I ate about five times a day. And now a little bit closer. Definitely closer to three.

But, I would make it with these. This was kind of a thing in in Game Changers. What I would I would talk about my trough bowls because I love to eat a variety of different foods in the same bite.

You know how there's those people that like, separate all their foods and they just like to to eat around the plate? I like it all together. So I'd make these massive bowls that would have, you know, grains and greens on the bottom and then whatever kind of flavor I was going for on the top.

So if I was going for Italian, it'd be like plant based meatballs and garbanzo beans and sometimes lentils in, like, a marinara sauce. Or, you know, if it was Mexican, you know, all the Mexican spices and, like a savory kind of tofu scramble, like maybe it was that it was for breakfast and lots of guacamole on the top.

Vegan sour cream, maybe a little vegan cheese if I was cheating. So yeah. So just big nourishing bowls. I'm a volume eater. Like, I just really, I love crunchy.

That's just my favorite experience with with food, people have different, you know, feelings, like that they like to

experience when they're eating. And I just love crunchy everything.

So, I would say. Probably still burning some calories during the day with your appetite. Definitely. Yeah. Yeah. And I think I'm burning calories while I'm eating it because I, it's a lot of chewing involved.

But dinner would be the same, you know, be like a different style trough bowl or like a big juicy plant based burgers with burger with I love this.

Daily meals and simple cooking habits

I could saute onions and just eat an entire one. So lots of sauteed onions on top and maybe a little bit more tumeric. I was big on the tumeric for for once I learned the world of spices and how much power they have.

I really kind of got into those. So a lot of cumin and turmeric on on top of things for dinner to bring the inflammation down for the next day. Do you cook? It if not, if I can't make it in 15 minutes.

Okay. Yeah. I will not be in the kitchen for any longer than that. I just say, yeah, I'm not a talented chef at all. And I just, I, I when I'm hungry, then I make something and, you know, I'm hangry.

If it's over 15 minutes that I have to wait. So, guys, has been cooking the same way he does. Yeah, he kind of just he was with me. He's like, oh, that's messed up.

All right, I think we can do this. But he kept he's Filipino, so he kept fishing because that was just so much a part of his diet growing up. And oddly enough, he kept the dairy in for a while.

We'll talk about that, and I. Know I will. Yeah, because he had an interesting journey there. Yeah. For anybody listening, you know, I everybody's listening.

But if you go to Amazon after this interview, there is a book, let the plant based games Begin optimizing athletic Performance with plant based nutrition that Darcey wrote.

In 2023. I see it on Kindle. Is it paper also? Exclusive. Yeah, yeah. Now we have, it's paperback two on switch for good.org in the show. Okay, okay. We'll talk about that.

But if you are, you know, scratching your head, how do I improve my gym performance. Some of you are Iron Man and Iron Woman. You might want to get over and read that book.

Let the plant based games begin, because you're going to talk to world record holder and her experience with it. So, along the way, you developed quite a passion for educating the world.

That dairy was something for baby cows and not for humans. And you set up a, organization foundation switch for good. And that's the number four. And you have, you know, an incredible podcast.

Obviously, that's part of the vegan experience. But now, you know, I walk into a high school gym and I see those darn posters that say chocolate milk.

Good for the athletes, clearly. But for the dairy industry, what got you so ticked off that is that I'm going to set up a whole campaign. Right? I actually been, you know, very high profile campaign, anti dairy, you know, drink plant milks and you know you really your focus and important focus.

Yeah. It's it's interesting that you said what got me ticked off because I don't know how you know me that well to know that that's what I do have been the inspiration for me to start something of this nature. But, I was part of the U. S.

Olympic team when the dairy, when the dairy industry was sponsoring the U. S. Olympic team, was a title sponsor

for about ten years. They are no longer the sponsor.

But I had this lie perpetuated to me for so long that athletes needed cows milk to be champions. This is basically what we were told. And the dieticians and even the physicians inside the, you know, the confines of the Olympic Training Center.

They parroted all this rhetoric to us and so after I retired, I got a group of athletes together in 2018, we wanted to put a, a, an ad on the closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games that year.

That year, which is the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, there were eight of us very passionate vegan athletes that are like, we didn't drink cow's milk, and many of these athletes had many gold medals.

I just had the one silver. But, and so we said, it's time that we stand up and tell the truth and just, just clear the air here. This is a this is ridiculous that this is still being perpetuated.

So we got an incredible crew together and awesome director funding the athletes. We filmed this 32nd ad. It's going to air on the closing ceremonies on NBC in six cities.

Switch for Good and anti-dairy advocacy

Like we're all pumped up and it airs one time in Washington, DC. And the dairy industry called NBC and got it kicked off. And so it aired. No more cities.

Wow. So that next morning we called, said what the. You know, and they didn't they were not as forthcoming as they could have been. NBC but it was very clear that the, you know, the powers that be who spent a little bit more money than we do, which was had been zero until this commercial on NBC.

And that really was the fire that was the fire. I think if they had left the commercial on, you know, it had aired in those six cities that we paid for, there wouldn't be a switch for good.

So if there's there's one reason that I'm grateful to the dairy industry, it's because of that, because that that moment, it was inside and it was just a fire that was like, this is not how this is going to end.

This is not how this is going to end. We are going to end consumption of dairy in the United States. And we're somewhat well on our way. Excellent. And again, people can go to switch for good.org and read and you should.

There's all kinds of resources and recipes and and all and there's an incredible podcast. I had the honor being on it at least once, June 24th. But I'm just scrolling through.

We got your firm and who I'm interviewing for this. And they say, chef AJ did a great recipe demo for this summit and oh, good. Doctor Monica Agarwal, who I'm interviewing for this.

I met a great cardiologist and many, many others. So, you know, just make it a habit to listen, during the week and you'll learn a lot. And you got a co-host and I don't think you're, you know, as many people know about Alexandra Paul, but she's no slouch either.

She is actually famous. I am not, yeah. Yeah, it was famous for being on Baywatch for six years and, 5 or 6 years and being in 100 movies, but you guys are just best friends.

She's also vegan, of course. She's a really fierce animal rights activist. Does a lot of direct action. She just. Yeah. And she's my hero. I mean, she she is ten years older than I am.

She looks 30. She's 60, turning 62, and, she can still put on that silicon red bathing suit for Baywatch like she did before. So there's cheers to the plant based diet.

She's been vegan for over 25 years now. Does she live in real or. No. She lived in Los Angeles for many, many years, but she, her husband, moved up to Oregon to be with her mom as she, traverses Alzheimer's.

Okay. Yeah. How in the heck did you get name one of the top 20 most famous vegans in the world. That was that. That all deserved all you heard. That was, that was vegnews that did that.

And I have no idea why you have to ask. Okay. And an organization I love, mercy for animals named your podcast the Best Vegan Podcast 2024. So you guys are, you know, a big influence on people.

That's really, really good. We love the work that we do so much, as do you, I know, and. Yeah, well, it's so, for now, I'm a little distressed. I mean, without diving deep into politics, I'm excited about Make America Healthy Again because there really hasn't been much conversation at the highest levels of government and trying to turn around chronic disease.

But yeah, I don't think raw milk is the answer. And we are hearing a bit about, you know, raw milk as opposed. To that is not the answer. No, the government's not going to get behind that either.

I don't think I know I felt, you know, we have a, the senators and representatives have the bill, but it is a is a bill that we worked on for the last three years called add soy, which would bring a plant based alternative.

Right. And, and so after the election, it was like, oh, boy, you know, because this is going to go into the new administration, in the new Congress, this bill, it's been alive.

It has, you know, introduced in both the Senate and the House. And it goes it's going to go into 2025. And, I was feeling a bit disillusioned. But as the cabinet is being built, there's actually quite a few people like Pam Bondi and indefinitely, Bobby Kennedy who are going to be very good for this bill to pass.

I mean, lobby hates animal, Aggie hates Smithfield. He hates factory farming, you know, and he's very, very much for healthy school. You know, food for kids.

So, you know, just kind of taking the positives out of that. And, and maybe, maybe this is a year we get it done. Yeah. And again, for everybody listening as soon as we're done here, you go to switch for good.org.

And there's a button that says add soy. Act as a way and you can quickly fill out and it will send a message to your congressional representatives and senators in your region based on your zip code, a, comment about, you know, H. R.

1619 as 2943.

Podcast, co-host, and public recognition

So one for the House of Representatives, one for the Senate, because soy milk is high protein and for growing kids, it's probably the best plant based choice.

Right. And the. Same macros as cows milk for the. Mouth, pretty much. You know, we don't need more kids drinking cows. Make. Do you have a, milk of choice that goes in your latte?

Soy, I mean, definitely. Well, for sure, with with the latte, as far as that foams, I mean, I like to, but I like the taste of soy. And if I'm in a hurry and I want to have a little protein in the coffee together, then yeah, I, I'd say soy for sure.

Same for me too. What about was one last topic. You know, the things that divide the nutritional world? It's certainly plant based, good or bad for you versus carnivore keto, paleo.

Well, we know where the science is. There's not even a way to have. Although I engage in such debates only because not too many people will stand up and get smacked around by, the other side of the table.

But, you know, we know that. But the other one is the protein. You know, one, the, conversation is swirling all over social media, and you're an athlete, you know, high protein, medium protein, low protein plant protein.

And I know the science. And I know there's no doubt. Obviously, you're a living example of, you know, the highest level of athletic performance without animal products.

But where do you and your, you know, reading of training literature, your own search for healthy longevity fit into the protein world? Yeah, it's it's so strange how it's it's still seems to be raging.

It feels like we've put that fire out a long time ago with the with the facts and figures. As an athlete, I was much more focused on carbohydrates, and I was on protein.

Although I had an awareness of protein, I knew exactly how much I needed if I was maintaining or gaining muscle. And as a track cyclist, coming from being a professional road cyclist, I actually had weight to gain and it was mostly in my glutes and hips for the standing start of my event.

And that's really what was pretty extraordinary. As I mentioned early on in this interview, I didn't know if I could get stronger. I was just hoping to maintain.

Protein, longevity, and closing thoughts

But switching over to plant protein, I went from lifting on the inverted leg sled from 385 pounds times 30 reps, times five sets to right before Olympic Games, when I started tapering about three weeks before 585 pounds.

Times 60 reps, times six sets. Now I'm at 135 pounds females. So that is that is a an extraordinary amount of weight that I was losing on plant protein and gaining gaining the weight that I needed to gain to be able to get off the line, as I mentioned.

And so now in my life now, I mean, I don't even think about protein. Maybe if you are trying to gain. Yes, it's something that you that you play in there, but I was only eating about 1.5 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight.

And one thing that I think has happened, I think a lot of times I don't think I know a lot of times people think that what the USDA recommends, which for the regular person is point eight, if I'm not mistaken, right?

Eight bits per pound of body weight. Well, you know, that's been made up by the bro protein group. Not a lot because in that I mean people in 200g of protein a day, which you're the one that can tell us what kind of detrimental effect that can have on our kidneys.

And kidneys and every tissue in our body, and promote aging by jacking up, mediator called mTOR. And IGF one. And yeah, you may look good, but, you know, when you get colon cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, you and I can feel so good.

So, yeah. Look, doctor, great unsound approach. But if anybody's. So there there is that USDA recommendation 0.8g/kg of protein per day. And actually a few people like Doctor Valter Longo thinks that's too high in general.

But some of the doctors out there pushing meat, meat, meat for muscle, muscle, muscle have just changed it to 0.8g per pound, which means 2.2 times more becomes the acceptable normal stat, with the government said it's not.

What longevity scientists said is not what basic science said. So you're right. Spot on. So people want to follow you. I just got to give a shout out on Instagram, but they gotta look it up on vegan Olympian.

And what's the deal with Jason Robel, my good friend? He's all over your Instagram. I love him, but is he just a buddy? He is actually our digital marketing director at Twitch for good for the last four years.

So he's this great. Yeah, he's my bro. I'm his sister. We really, I'm crazy about him. He's the one that connected me with you, during Covid. And you saved me.

Was a mess. And you were like, what are you doing? Let's help you. Yeah. So you turn that around. I'll be forever. He's a former Detroiter, so he's so good.

He's doing awesome. He's doing super awesome. So you should connect with them. Yeah. Yeah, I will, I will follow up. Maybe, you know, as mother passed so he don't think he comes to Detroit as often.

Sadly, she was wonderful lady. Well, I want to respect your time. I had a half an hour. There's been a lively, interesting and engaging conversation. Lots of things for the audience to do.

Switch for good, dawg. Sign up the ad. So I just actually did it while we were talking. It literally like, you're multitasking. I'm asking it do funny vibes again, go over to Amazon and maybe augment your, well, you have to go to switch for good for the book Let the plant games begin.

And, just generally support what that is doing because it's, you know, one more important voice in this, you know, health. And you might say, well, what does this have to do with heart?

Well, we talked about fitness. We talked about clean food. We talked about rational protein consumption. We talked about avoiding dairy. There's nothing joyful.

In fact, just in the last two weeks, a new study came out that women drinking cow milk bump up their risk of heart disease significantly. And that's been a debate.

But, this latest study in 100,000 people in, Europe, I think it was Sweden was pretty definitive. We've got a fair amount of breast, and the male data was a little fuzzy, but the female data was pretty darn clear.

So if you love your heart, you're not drinking raw milk or cow's milk or anything else. No. I know we didn't even get into, you know, less inflammation, less oxidative stress and blood flow, which is just the key for an athlete.

So really optimizing blood flow, you do not want dairy running through your veins. If you want to optimize blood flow right. And you brought up that's not just heart out and bring out that sexual health.

That's every parameter of what you might call the good life. So this has been fun. Enjoy. Winter in Puerto Vallarta. I will try we will. Connect sometime in California.

I don't go quite as much, but with you and Jason both there. Now that know. That's a draw. Yes, yes, yes. Thank you. This has been awesome. Good luck with the summit.

I know it's going to go gangbusters. And everyone's going to learn so much and change their lives. Thank you so much. Yeah.