

- Lawrence Neal: 00:02:00 Lawrence Neal here and welcome back to highintensitybusiness.com. Today's guest is John Little who returns for a part three on the show. John is considered one of the top fitness researchers in North America and accomplished author in the field of exercise including titles like Max Contraction Training, Body by Science, The Art of Expressing the Human Body, and more recently The Time-Saver's Workout. As well as books in philosophy, history, and martial arts. John's articles have been published in every major fitness and martial arts magazine in North America. Throughout his career, John has worked alongside the biggest same as the industry, from the estate of Bruce Lee to bodybuilding icons such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mike Mentzer, Steve Reeves, and Lou Ferrigno to action stars such as Jackie Chan. John is also an award-winning documentary filmmaker, having produced and directed films for both independent companies and major studios such as Warner Bros.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:02:55 John and his wife, Terry, opened Nautilus North Strength & Fitness Centre in 2004, where they continue to conduct studies and exercise and share their data with their personal training clients. Nautilus North has supervised in excess of 80,000 one on one workout sessions. John, welcome back to the show.

John Little: 00:03:15 Thank you very much, Lawrence, nice to speak to you again.

Lawrence Neal: 00:03:18 You're welcome, and was that accurate or is there any part of that intro that needs to be updated?

John Little: 00:03:25 No, no, it seems needlessly a few so I'm afraid but thank you.

Lawrence Neal: 00:03:31 No, you're welcome. Yeah, no, really looking forward to talking again. It's been a while and I relistened to our very, very early podcast which I think the first one now is almost three or four years ago, which feels like a long time ago now. It's always so interesting to listen to a podcast back then because it's almost like rereading a really old journal entry. Because you're hearing your thoughts and your mindset and where you are at in terms of your, I guess, mental capacity and what knowledge you had at that point in your life. That's just such a weird thing to be able to do that, and yeah, it's just fun to listen back. Because, again, it's like, "Damn it, John told me all this stuff all that time ago and I should be doing that now." What have you been up to? Because I've seen you obviously published this new book, and yeah, what have you been up to over the last couple years or so in terms of your career and things?

John Little: 00:04:30 Well, I've been doing a lot of writing. Did a, actually, a cold case true crime book. The only reason I did it was that we had a family connection to the crime. Not that we committed it, but my father had written a book on the subject of the murder of a Canadian artist that took place in 1917. I grew up with the story and, anyway, I thought that it was probably

time that a really thorough investigation of all of the data was examined. I involved some police detectives in an effort to try and get as close to the truth as to what happened to this person as possible. That occupied a bit of time and was a lot of fun to write as opposed to philosophy tracks or exercise articles or books. That occupied some time and then I've just been tinkering away with some pet documentary projects that are by no means ready for general consumption. But just subjects that were of interest to me that I had time to pour into and try and produce something that I thought would be significant and enlightening in some respects.

Lawrence Neal: 00:05:55 Can you give us any hints or previews on that stuff and talk about it or is it top secret at the moment?

John Little: 00:06:01 No, it's not top secret, it's the one I am still working on is a documentary on Che Guevara was the Marxist revolutionary who was Fidel Castro's right hand man. He, like Ayn Rand, another subject that I've done a film on in the past, he's a very polarizing figure. I always find those types of individuals to be very intriguing because everybody wants to tell you how you ought to think about them. We have a lot of the exiles from Cuba in areas like Miami that call him a murderer and a homophobe and a racist. And then you have the people in Latin American countries, which consider him just the side of a saint, the patron saint of the oppressed. Like most human beings, the truth is somewhere between those two markers, it just kind of dawned on me that rather than listen to political

talking heads tell you how you ought to interpret some person or his legacy.

John Little: 00:07:13 It would be more meaningful to hear from that person him or herself and let them speak about their own life, their own philosophy, and their belief system as if you were sitting down and let's say having lunch with them for a half hour. That was a project that I started mainly because I recognized I knew nothing about this person when I was in Cuba and his image is ubiquitous. Other than knowing some very cursory things such as that he died in Bolivia, that he was a Marxist-Leninist, that he was active in the Cuban Revolution. That's about all I knew, and so I've been to Cuba several times and each time I go I usually buy some books and some other books on Che that I read over the years. I just wanted to see if there was enough exist in the audio video material where I could fashion a platform whereby he could tell his own story in his own words.

John Little: 00:08:18 I know this would be anathema to the years of many in the high intensity training community who tend to be somewhat right wing and not a few of them are objectivists. But I remember having lunch with Leonard Peikoff, who was Ayn Rand's right hand man in her legal and intellectual era. We were talking about objectivism and the fact that at least I brought up the subject and I said, "It's been my observation that a lot of people simply parrot statements from Ayn Rand or whatever. I said, "I don't see the individualism in that." It's good to come to those conclusions after your own thought

processes but I said just to simply repeat what someone else said and be part of a club doesn't really seem to be the full use of one's reason. He actually agreed with me, which I was surprised, he said, "Yeah," he said, "There's a lot of people need justice movement that I certainly don't care for and wouldn't want to spend time with."

John Little: 00:09:21 He said, in his words, he said, "I would much rather go to lunch with a communist who actually sincerely believed in his cause and discuss it with him." He said, "Of course, I would try and disabuse him of this notion but," he said, "these type of people are far more interesting to me than just people that aren't putting much thought into what their beliefs are." It was in that spirit that I undertook the project.

Lawrence Neal: 00:09:51 This stuff is so interesting to me right now. I did a podcast earlier today with another friend of mine in high intensity training called Gary Knights, and he's very interested in politics and philosophy as well. We talked a fair bit about objectivism and the way that a lot of people in the high intensity training community seem to be... that philosophy really seems to resonate with them, and which he just largely attributes for to my commences interest in Ayn Rand's work.

John Little: 00:10:27 Absolutely.

Lawrence Neal: 00:10:29 Obviously, they veer towards right wing notions around politics and things. We were talking about that and I just got really into it lately. I'm reading Atlas Shrugged for the first time, I'm a little ashamed to say it's taken me this long to

finally get around to it. I'm really interested in learning about more about this stuff, and I just love to ask why do you think that... I asked Gary same question, actually, why do you think that so many people in high intensity training are so into objectivism and why are so many of them right wing? Why is that do you think?

John Little: 00:11:04 It's a good question. I think one of the appeals of the object of this literature is that there's a certain absolutism to it. We like absolutes, we don't like dealing with relatives or something that is gray. We prefer black and white as a moral compass. It's a very cogent philosophy, it's very hierarchical, it's each level from its axioms to its metaphysics to its epistemology through to the ethics are logically dependent on the underpinning level. That's nice, intellectually, it is a very rigorous and satisfying philosophy that is very broad. It covers almost every facet of life, and so when people come to philosophy, you tend to come because you're seeking answers of a sort. Objectivism certainly does provide you with answers. I think the danger in any philosophical system is, as I might have said on a prior podcast, that old axiom of Voltaire comes to the surface, which is cherish those who seek the truth but beware of those that find it.

John Little: 00:12:27 Seeking the truth is a great thing, and I spent many happy hours poring over the works of Ayn Rand and, in particular, Leonard Peikoff, quite enjoy his material and get a lot out of it. But I think there is a danger in... Well, I said this once about Bruce Lee with the metaphor of the river, I think that there's a

danger inherent in standing too close to the river of another person's thoughts because it can pull you from the bank of your own identity and sweep you further away from it. I think one of our tasks anyway, as human beings, is to come to know ourselves. That means what we like, not what we should or ought to like, but what we do. Otherwise, you're just simply being told how to behave and you're given ready made conclusions to accept. I don't think that's a good, or particularly, nourishing and satisfying way to go through life.

John Little: 00:13:31 I think there's an awful lot of enjoyment in the process of figuring out who you are and what you like and what you want as opposed to having a parent or a theologian or a philosopher try to hammer a round peg into a square hole. In order to try and answer your question, I think there's a lot of reasons people have gravitated in the high intensity training community to objectivism. But I think one is the reliance on reason because if you like a scientific approach, it should be based on reason and science and objective evidence. Objectivism relies on the material provided to a person's senses, the sensory apparatus. There is that component which seems to ally with, quite easily, with the high intensity approach to exercise. I think Mike Mentzer, as you pointed out, had a tremendous influence. He was a fellow of both a psychological and a philosophical mindset.

John Little: 00:14:38 When he first burst onto the bodybuilding scene, he was, I guess, you could call him an existentialist, he would have called himself an existentialist. He liked the writings of Jean-

Paul Sartre, like Friedrich Nietzsche and people of that nature. That's the Mike Mentzer that I first got to know who was the secret at that time. He didn't believe he had all the answers, and also didn't believe anyone else had all. But he just thought it's worth the pursuit to try and... that's the definition of philosophy, level of wisdom, to try and acquire wisdom in certain areas. Over time, he came to Ayn Rand and I believe that was full stop for him. I think he felt that this was the most integrated, reasonable philosophy that he had yet encountered and he embraced it and tried to live it as best he could throughout the remainder of his life.

John Little:            00:15:30    But for people in the high intensity training world, we tend to be a group of hero worshipers, to some extent, whether it be Arthur Jones or it be Mike Mentzer, or whoever,. Consequently we like what they like because we want to be more like them. We like their training programs and we like their hyperbole at times. In the case of people like Jones, and we like their belief system. I mean, Mentzer was in the bodybuilding world, at least, he was an intellectual. We liked the idea of being professorial and big muscle men. But it's funny because Mike, he didn't think that having big muscles was the be all, end all. I remember being at a seminar he conducted in 1981 and he was saying who's grown too much muscle this year? Who's grown so much muscle that have bothered them? Of course, nobody put up their hands and goes, "Well, of course not." He goes, "That's why you're here because you think my being a champion bodybuilder I'll be able to give you a secret or two."



John Little: 00:16:43 He said, "But the reality is the muscle growth process is much, much slower than you think it is." He said, "I think the best thing I can give you as a grounding and reality as to what to expect. So if you don't get frustrated, then maybe you will become big muscle men." And then he paused and said dryly, "A very lofty goal, indeed." It's a very long answer to a very simple question you asked me, but I think there's a multitude of reasons why it seems the majority of predominant trainers in the high intensity training field embrace objectivism and will quote blocks of texts from Ayn Rand at the drop of a hat, or Ayn Rand, sorry. I don't know, to me, it was just that there's a big world out there, there's a lot of like and objectivism but I've never been a joiner. I've always been an outsider. For me to say, "Oh, yeah, that's it." I'm not thinking anymore about the subject.

John Little: 00:17:44 You can label me whatever, objectivist or rationalist or a certain political affiliation that doesn't interest me. Because I think, as Bertrand Russell said, our ideas and our knowledge change as we gather more experience and we grow older. Even the sciences get new information into them over each decade. I think you have to have standards by which you accurately and validly assess information that is presented to you such as the one that the objective is to use, which is the law of non-contradiction. I think that's hugely helpful on our thought processes. But the fact that you have to listen to Rachmaninoff because Ayn Rand liked him and I don't think that follows necessarily.

- Lawrence Neal: 00:18:39 Yeah, that's so interesting. I think, going forward, I'd be interested in, if you're up for it, John, doing a separate podcast where we get to dig a little bit more into philosophy. Because I think it's very interesting to a lot of the listeners who, as you say, may be objectivists or interested in learning more about different types of philosophy. That'd be cool. But I want to... Sorry, were you going to comment?
- John Little: 00:19:06 No, I was just going to say I think the big thing really is just to be a liberated individual intellectually. Don't be you can serve only yourself in that respect in terms of knowledge and what your standards are. You don't have to join a group of any kind or spout another human being's sentences as if they were Holy Writ. Come to your own conclusions, form your own opinions, and have reasons for it. I think there's a certain wisdom as Alan Watts once said, an insecurity or an ignorance. As Socrates said, if you don't know something, that's okay, cap to the fact, we're not omniscient. It's not necessary, a lot of high intensity trainers also tend to strike a pose as if they're medical professionals. It's not our bailiwick. We have not been trained in pathology, we haven't gone through the training that physicians have. We know the muscular system pretty well, but that's usually where it comes to an end.
- John Little: 00:20:11 I don't know about my brethren in the community but I tend to get asked a lot of questions from people with medical issues, and I can answer within the sphere that I'm familiar with. But anytime it comes up to the border of legitimate

medicine, I have to bow out and recommend that they speak to someone who's qualified. I think it's there's a lot of sensei syndrome in high intensity training, which is people who otherwise might not have anyone that's willing to listen to what they have to say will because of a certain knowledge they've acquired with regards to how to pick up and put down a weight. People will be forced to live listen to them. So then they tend to assume a very professorial all inclusive knowledge on all facets from pathology to health to fitness to strengths, and that's their fiefdom. Then they very zealously guard this fiefdom, where the reality is what we know is categorically, is really just a little grain of sand on the beach.

John Little: 00:21:31 We hope to learn more but it's, I think, supreme hubris to rise up at an age of 40 or in your 50s with your 40 or 50 years of experience and judge a species and their belief systems and habits that go back hundreds of thousands of years. It's important to, I think, keep an open mind but as Mike Mentzer pointed out, not a wide open mind where you're uncritically accepting anything that comes into it. But it's okay to recognize the limits that each and every one of us possess and they will be individual specific. Then just act accordingly at that point.

Lawrence Neal: 00:22:22 Yeah, no, that's well said. I think this stuff's fascinating and we could definitely go into a whole podcast talking about a specific topic. But I want to talk about your book. You have a new book, The Time-Saver's Workout, and really enjoyed the read. Tell me why did you decide to write this book?

John Little: 00:22:45 Well, I just I thought that the time was right to, at least, offer an alternative because I noted that the pendulum of time spent in the gym was swinging back to a pre-body by science approach. It tends to, I think, because human beings, by and large, prefer not to output as much energy if they don't have to. It's we have to cap to the fact that what we are advocating is not pleasant, nobody likes the severe lactic acid gnosis that occurs when your muscles are working hard. We don't like coming up to the cusp of nausea, and it's one of those things that if this really is a... Well, it dawned on me that the most valuable commodity we have in our lives is time, that's what life is made up of. Once you utilize your time in a certain activity, it's gone. It's irretrievably gone. Nobody on their deathbed is going to say, "Damn, I wish I had spent more hours in the gym."

John Little: 00:23:58 Given that any benefit we can get from exercise, be it cardiovascular, muscular size, strength, etc., has a genetic cap to it. It seems to me that there is a lot of people wasting effort trying to drive a higher level of adaptation by doing a greater volume of work that at the end of the day is not going to pay them any dividends. It was, in my opinion, it was time to step back and see if there's an alternative. I'm not holding it forth as being the one and only panacea for exercise, it's simply an alternative. If you don't want to spend your life in a gym, but you still want decent results, then at least consider training less frequently with a little higher intensity and leave it at that. Because, at some point, all of us, especially those of us who train in a high intensity fashion, will bump up against

our genetic ceiling. For most of us, that happened many years ago.

- John Little: 00:25:03 And yet, at that point, we're still unaccepting the fact that we don't have the bodies that we had dreamed about. We all, in my case, I would have loved to have been Mike Mentzer or Frank Zane, or one of these guys. It never happened. I tried every approach under the book, just like most of us did who grew up in that era.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:25:24 Oh, no, John, I think you look pretty good.
- John Little: 00:25:28 Well, you just need to get out more often, that's it. But it just it wasn't in the cards, so at some point you recognize that there's a point of diminishing returns. So how much effort, how much energy are you going, and time, are you going to invest in an enterprise that's not yielding you any appreciable benefits at that point? To me, and I remember Mike Mentzer telling me this years ago said that, "It's only rational to use what exists in short supply as economically as possible." I think that's true.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:26:03 So wise.
- John Little: 00:26:03 Mike was always looking for a way to get you what you could get from resistance training without spending any more time than you needed to. As he used to say, even one step more than you need is over training by definition. I bow to the fact that exercise is important to our health in terms of dumping out lots of glycogen and preventing Type 2 diabetes and other metabolic syndrome things that are undesirable. I also know

it's beneficial to try and preserve our strengths as we age, and our aerobic capacity and things of that nature. But we don't need separate cardio training and we don't need to be in the gym three or four days a week to accomplish this. Now, having said that, the biggest resistance I get from people, even in the high intensity community, about training once a week, let's say, is that they just feel they need to be in the gym more often. That's where the discussion ends because I can't argue with your feelings, if that's how you feel, that's fine.

John Little:           00:27:18   But the evidence would tend to suggest that it's unnecessary, and given that... An interesting thing to consider Lawrence is, and again it goes back to Mike Mentzer, he made this point at the same seminar that I attended. He looked around all of us who had attended and he said, "How much muscle do you think you can gain?" We didn't know, sky's the limit, we certainly were under muscled compared to Mike Mentzer. Obviously, we had, there was all sorts of room for improvement. He pointed out that we probably wouldn't gain more than 10 pounds, not even that. He said, realistically, five pounds a year is a considerable achievement. He said, "But let's say it's 10 pounds, you're going to gain 10 pounds of muscle over the next year." He did the math on it and he said, "Divide that by 365 days and you come out to less than half an ounce." He said, "That's not even going to show up on a body weight scale."

- John Little: 00:28:16 He said, "And yet how many of you frantically weigh yourself every day or tape your arms or are thinking that there's going to be this huge increase or a significant increase coming?" It moves at a glacial pace, and the other thing is that it's capped. Energy conservation and preservation are two things that really led to our survival, and that's one of the reasons why it's not very easy to grow this tissue that then requires more energy, certainly more energy, perhaps, on our ancestors would have been able to pull from the environment to sustain. Again, if 10 pounds in one year is beyond the reach of most of us, then how much muscle can one realistically gain over the course of a training career given that there's a genetic cap? Look, you could be generous and say, "Each of us has the potential to gain 20 pounds." No, I don't know that, I would imagine given genetic variation that exists between individuals there's going to be a sliding scale.
- John Little: 00:29:22 Some may only gain seven pounds for a course for training career, others might go as high as 30, others might be stuck at 10. But whatever it is, it's fixed, and once you recognize that it's a slow process, it takes time. Once you bumped up against it, you can do whatever you want but it's not going to alter the fact that you're not gaining anymore. That's the hardest thing for us to accept because we all have experienced tremendous gains at some point in our career, usually, at the beginning. So we know that we can do it or we have done it and we want that to continue, but it won't. That's when problems start, that's when you reach the fork in the road, that's when it must be your diet, or it must be your

supplementation, or it must be the fact that you need more volume. Maybe you need four sets is more demanding than one set, so maybe you need to up your sets, maybe you need to be in the gym two or three days a week.

John Little: 00:30:23 Or maybe it's simply the end of the road for that and that's the hardest thing because you can't sell it, there's nothing I can sell you about that. It's just, well, it was a good trip, now, what you want to do is maintain what you got and go out and discover things that actually give your life meaning and joy and pursue those with the added strength and protection that your training sessions give to you.

Lawrence Neal: 00:30:50 That's awesome. One thing I wanted to bring up, which you mentioned there, was you felt that the pendulum was swinging back the other way towards some of the, I guess, steady state and similar modalities of exercise, which obviously you don't support. Why did you think that? What made you think that? What was the evidence for that?

John Little: 00:31:11 Well, the evidence is whenever you go into a gym, that's the way people train and they're typically in there, at least, three days a week. If you talk to the average person at a social function, they'll tell you that they have a treadmill at home that they use on a daily basis. They use weights and they'll do it three days a week. I think part of that is that it doesn't necessarily represent overly demanding training. In fact, the more often you engage in it, the easier it gets and the less energy I've put the rest. They get into a habit sorting it and becomes more of a psychological dependency to do a certain



amount of physical activity. It's not that I have any problem with it, I think I respect any individual enough if that's what they want to do. For whatever the reasons, it's none of my business, they're free to have at it. If they do get results from doing it, then so much the better and more power to them.

John Little: 00:32:11 But one thing that I think doesn't really get discussed too much is the wear and tear factor that physical activity brings to the body. The older you get, the longer it takes to recover from wear and tear, if indeed it recovers at all. We've talked previously that even a seemingly innocuous activity like pedaling a bicycle requires at least 10,000 opening and closings of that hinge joint in the knees. Well, that hinge joint in the knees is not that dissimilar from the hinges in the door. In your door, there's a lifetime of normal wear and tear that they're prepared to accommodate. Anything that transcends that, it's like going to your door and opening it 10,000 times three or four days a week just because you feel you should. All that does is it's a rope passing over a rock face for a needless amount of times and puts most people on a fast track toward a knee replacement or arthritis. That's not something you really want to embrace as you head into your autumn years.

John Little: 00:33:27 Every activity, physical activity carries with it wear and tear. I don't know anyone who played varsity level athletics that isn't arthritic at this point from all the games and the practices and the training that they went through. We like to quote Arthur Jones in our community, but we tend to ignore his tail about

how lions behave, which is very infrequent. Unlike lions, we look for ways to be more active because we are always doubting that we're active enough. And yet our ancestors only did physical activity because they had to, not because they went out and looked for opportunities to expend more energy than they needed to.

Lawrence Neal: 00:34:12 This is a really interesting topic for me right now. You have a very good memory, by the way, unless you recently listened to our podcast recently, did you or did you just remember that?

John Little: 00:34:26 No, I just remember... Well, it was one of them, I can't remember, we did two.

Lawrence Neal: 00:34:30 Yeah, the first one you talked about that which was years ago and you almost said it verbatim. I've spoken about this quite a bit, actually, and it's something I do struggle with. As you might remember, I'm quite a keen basketball player, and I play once a week for an hour, I strength train about once a week at the moment. I have had some injuries since we spoke, so I've had about one injury a year that's took me out for, well, in both cases, I couldn't walk for four days. One was a calf tear, the other one was a sprained ankle. It's interesting, right, because the thing is Arthur Jones said, "Who cares how big your bicep is when your lower back hurts?" It's when you get your lower back pain, you don't get how big your bicep is? I said it the other way around. It's easy for me sitting here 100% healthy right now to think I love basketball, I'm never going to stop playing.

Lawrence Neal: 00:35:28 But when I have those injuries, it causes me to reevaluate in that moment and say, "Is this really worthwhile?" Because there's obviously the acute injuries and then there's the wear and tear and stuff that might manifest itself later on in life. I might justify it by saying, "Well, I only play an hour a week, you know." But this is the challenge I have is really reconciling this because I get so much joy of playing basketball because you get into flow, it's so satisfying when you hone the skill set. At the same time, you're socializing, right? It's one of my key social activities. Now, I'm just curious how you think about that? Do you have play in sport in your own life on [inaudible 00:36:16] strength training and do you have any advice for me on how to think about this and manage it going forward?

John Little: 00:36:23 Well, again, you're your own person so you love basketball, it brings you joy to play it. I would then view your resistance training as being an adjunct to doing the things you like. You want a stronger muscle, which basically gives you a bigger shock absorber, if you will, to allow you to continue to do this activity. Even though there are high force in wear and tear factors associated with the discipline. There's very few things in life that bring us joy. If you find one, as Shakespeare said, clasp it to your soul with hoops of steel. I'd be the last one to say don't play basketball. If that's something you really enjoy doing, do it. Both of my, well, three of my sons have played hockey, I had a daughter who was figure skating in dance. Being a parent isn't just imparting your knowledge to the children, it's you learn from being a parent from your children.

John Little: 00:37:22 I've had a son that almost died as a result playing hockey when he lacerated his spleen. To me, the attitude was that sport owes you nothing, or you owe that sport nothing rather. They were all very good hockey players and I loved watching them play. That was the greatest joy of my life was to go and watch your children progress in their skill set in the sport and become a leading scorer on a team, or even in some cases, getting into a fight that they did well on the ice and handling themselves well. As a parent, there's a primal component to that and I recognize that hockey has stayed with them their entire lives. When they went to university, their roommates were people they played hockey against. When they go to parties, they gravitate to the hockey guys because they have this connection. The social element, as you mentioned. I would not deny you or anybody that.

John Little: 00:38:27 For me, I went martial arts, I was always more in sports that were individual oriented rather than group oriented. I don't know that, that was to my benefit to do that. I think I probably would have been better socially, and in some respects, far more content if I'd been part of more team sports. But that's just the thoughts of an older person looking back on his life. But, again, if you like playing basketball, then you have to accept that injuries of wear and tear are they go with the territory. You'll be willing to make that trade for as long as you're willing to make that trade, and there's no way that you won't be injured. It happens to everybody. I don't know that there's a player in the NBA that hasn't been injured. The only way you get better at the sport, and the only way that the

sport seems to be easier for you, is to play it and to play it frequently.

John Little: 00:39:30 Again, if that gives you joy, then by all means continue to play basketball. I wouldn't recommend to anyone that they simply have a cookie cutter type existence based on my preferences.

Lawrence Neal: 00:39:49 It's a bit of a catch 22, though, isn't it? Because I remember Doug saying your physical capability is going to be as important to you when you're 60 as it is when you are 20. That's one of the reasons why we're so into the strength training, right? But basketball and physical activities like basketball will perhaps compromise that. I think to myself, when I'm 60, even following what I think is intelligent way of managing it and intelligent regime, I may still have some lingering injuries or issues or minor pain-

John Little: 00:43:22 Well, you may and, like I say, and that's why I mentioned that you'll continue to do it as long as you continue to do it. At some point, you might come to a fork in the road and say, "You know what, I'm hurting a lot more and a lot longer after playing basketball than I did 10 years ago." Comparatively, I think you're still a young man. If you still want to get your fill of whatever the sport is that you like, I mean, Doug, still, to my knowledge, he still rides BMX. I don't know if he competes, but that was his passion. It's I just think it's a very individual thing. From my vantage point, anything that brings wear and tear without giving you a disproportionate benefit at my station in life isn't worth pursuing. I want to do the least

amount of physical exercise that I can in order to maintain and build to what level I can my strength and my health and my metabolic health anyway.

John Little: 00:44:34 For me, once a week, going all out with my muscles satisfies that need. Then if something comes up, I'm prepared to do it. Like, for example, this past weekend, myself and my three sons and Jeremy Himers, who's a trainer here had to disassemble and take apart and put together and transport all of our Nautilus machines because we moved our gym. Well, that was a big job, that was very physically demanding, and then the next day I had to shovel a bunch of topsoil and things like that. I'm very aware of what I did with my muscles today from over the weekend. But that's, to me, it's just keep yourself strong and fit so you can do things that you need to do in your life, such as moving gym equipment when your business calls for it or doing stuff around the home. For you it might be going out to see your buddies and play basketball.

Lawrence Neal: 00:45:34 Interesting. Yeah, it's just give me a lot to think about and it's something I, yeah, I agree. It's like one of the things I thought about is, is there a way that I could stop playing and channel that for fun, though? Get those needs met elsewhere and over things. My fiance is just constantly worried that I'm going to get injured again. Now I'm 32, just to give you context and I-

John Little: 00:46:01 A young pup.

Lawrence Neal: 00:46:04 Yeah, but in athlete terms, that's old age, right?

- John Little: 00:46:10 Well, depending on the sport, that could be true.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:46:15 Yeah. But, no, I guess I still wrestle with this and I'll probably be listening to that just to think about it more and decide and how I'm going to-
- John Little: 00:46:22 Well, and the big thing, really, and for what we talked about earlier, is it's one of those things you got to figure out on your own. There's no advice I can give you or anybody else can give you, which is perfect that absolutely suits you. You're the one that knows your life experiences, you know what gives you pleasure, you know what's worth the physical cost that you're willing to make. Again, you just want to hedge your bets a little bit by just making sure that if there's a way that you can play the game and increase the safety parameters, then that's a smart move.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:46:57 I have been doing that, so that is actually really good point. I take my warm up very seriously now so I don't stretch, obviously. But I do, do like dynamic movements or warm up the joints and things. But I do, do think that helps in preventing injury. I will not go to... There's a certain session I used to go to where there was someone who was a very large... This one guy, and not very tall, he's more like 6'2, but very, very big, very muscular, and would be quite clumsy. If he was driving to the basket you wouldn't stand in his way. Obviously, if you were playing a professional league, you might take a charge, right? It's just not worth it in a recreational weekly session because you're going to get injured. I just thought, "There's no way I'm going to play hard

defense on this guy in this particular scenario. Also, another thing-

John Little: 00:47:53 Well, that's smart.

Lawrence Neal: 00:47:55 Right, yeah. Another thing is just Steve Maxwell said to me once, "Why do you just give rig out of promo shooting?" Because less contact, you're away from a lot of the action. That was quite good advice.

John Little: 00:48:10 That almost seems like advice, though. That if you say, "Oh, I want to make my business more successful." I say, "Well, just make a million dollars." It's as simple as that.

Lawrence Neal: 00:48:20 Unless you're a very great shooter. Shooting was my, well, is my thing so-

John Little: 00:48:24 Yeah, well, again any genetics, I mean, sorry, any sport requires certain genetic endowment. You could be a great shooter in basketball and not be very good in ice hockey, and then and vice versa for me. In basketball, there's different things you can do, perhaps you've got a great vertical jump, maybe you don't, maybe you hang back and shoot. But each of us tends to gravitate towards in sports, anyway, to those sports that it's easier for us to excel at. They come a little easier to us, and that's genetic aptitude. If you're a really good, I mean, you'd know having played basketball as long as you have what your strong suits are. If it's not shooting from the perimeter, I doubt it's going to become that if you just do that all the time.



Lawrence Neal: 00:49:16 Well, thankfully, it is one of my strengths so I thought that was quite relevant advice from Steve. But before, I guess, move on from sport and, John, we're going to have to do a part two because we've barely scratched my notes here. One of the things I remember reading a long time ago is the... You talk a lot about, or I think you mentioned a book some stuff around professional athletes not having a very long lifespan. I remember reading the life expectancy in the NFL was something like 56, which is extraordinarily low. I was wondering, I never really figured out, and people ask me why is that? What actually ends up killing them? I always wondered, do you know the answer to that [crosstalk 00:50:02]-

John Little: 00:50:02 No, I don't know other than football linemen tend to be a little on the obese side, most of them, because it's all about mass, right? How much mass the offensive line has to try and move to get through the defensive line? The bigger the mass, the harder of the job. Like if you remember, Refrigerator Perry, he was a big guy, I mean, just naturally big guy, but he's also quite fat. Not a healthy condition. Yeah, and I'm sure that doesn't apply right across the board. That if you're going to go into athletics, you shorten your life, I don't believe that's true. But I do think that if you go into athletics, especially, a highly dynamic type of sport, that you're going to be unhealthy. If only your joints are going to be unhealthy and thus your mobility, and then that can lead to a host of problems down the road. But it's we're not going to get rid of from our culture. It doesn't matter if I said, "Well, life

expectancy, here's exactly what happens, you play a sport, you're going to take 15 years off your life."

- John Little: 00:51:08 People are still going to play sports, that's just that's almost ingrained in human nature to be competitive, to want to compete. It's almost a Darwinian thing, it gives us a sense of self-efficacy and accomplishment and achievement. For some people, that's the only place in life where they get that, so it's not going away anytime soon. The only thing we can do is just try and see if we can make it a little safer so that they do less damage to themselves.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:51:35 It's so enjoyable as a spectator as well. We've got just had the Champions League Final in soccer here over in Europe. Then, obviously, you're in the middle of the NBA Playoffs and England soccer team are going to play an international game soon. It's just as a spectator is so much fun. In one hand, I get concerned about injuries, especially, the head injuries in a lot of combat sports and things like NFL. At the same time, like you say, we just get so much thrill out of and enjoyment out of watching people compete at that level in these different sports.
- John Little: 00:52:16 Well, someone once said that athletics is our substitute for war in times of peace, so that our bellicose instincts are given direction to be vented. There may be something to that. We are certainly bellicose species, history bears that out. Really some peace are just intermissions between acts of violence, typically. We like sports and we like sports that are highly dynamic that show great speed, that show great strength,

and dexterity. Things that are not common attributes, and that's why they're exceptional and that's why we like to watch them. Because you just don't experience that in day to day life typically. Yeah, I think sports they're a great thing. I love watching sports and I will always watch sports. I now wanted to recognizing that I don't want to be that guy. I enjoy watching this genetic gift in action to appreciate the potential of certain human beings in our species.

John Little: 00:53:27 But as far as wanting to ape that, I have no desire to, but I do appreciate it for what it is. It's like looking at a great painting. I can't approximate that artist's ability to do what he does on canvas, but I can certainly appreciate anyone who can do that and that's good enough for me.

Lawrence Neal: 00:53:49 Yeah, I feel the same way. I want to talk to you about recovery. I think you quoted in the new book, and certainly quoted in Body by Science, the Nautilus North study. We looked at group of individuals and how the differences in recovery that I see which was quite extraordinary in terms of some of those differences were huge. You quoted one person required 28 days to recover and another one 24 hours. A typical recovery is around five days, but obviously can't stretch out further for individuals. Just curious, how do you know if you are an individual that does require more recovery than the average?

John Little: 00:54:35 Well, the way I found out for myself was daily testing of composition and the bod pod. I do a workout or I test my composition and then do a workout and then not work out for

a period of two weeks. Then I would go back over the data and look at where I peaked out during that interval. For me, it was 10 days, actually. But the vast majority like most genetic expressions falls into a bell curve. For majority of people that we trained in our facility who were genetically average. We're not in a big city where we have varsity athletes or professional athletes, and people that, let's say recovery, the way they're wired occurs quicker than the norm. We found that the vast majority of people were 6.6 days, so call it seven days. There were outliers, as you said, there were some that were 24 hours and there were some that were two weeks. I guess if you don't have access to a sophisticated body composition testing device, you go by performance.

John Little:           00:55:47   That can be a little tricky too, because you can be up, let's say, five reps on your bench press because you took seven days off but, again, as Mike Mentzer pointed out, maybe you're settling for 70 units of progress, 100 units were possible because you came back and trained a little too soon. We don't seem to be inclined as a group, we high intensity trainers, to push a recovery intervals. To see what the... I have a lot of clients that train every two weeks and they're doing fine. But the problem is always at the intersection of business and what you do. Because, at some point, a client to a lot of trainers is simply a revenue stream. You're giving them something, yes, your knowledge, your insights into how to properly exercise to optimize results. But if you can get that same client in four days a week or twice a week, that's either

four times or twice the revenue stream that you get going once a week.

John Little: 00:56:55 It's a dilemma for some people, I know high intensity trainers who absolutely know that, that second workout of the week is not producing anything more than the first workout gave their client, but they'll still have them in twice a week. I think the best way an individual can do it or someone who's training under the direction of a trainer is to try and press the push out your recovery days. Because at some point, decomposition will occur, and when that happens, you'll be weaker. Because a smaller muscle is a weaker muscle. Typically, if it was a bigger one, just like a bigger rope is a stronger rope. But I think that that's probably your best, you have to gauge your by your performance. But there's so many factors that come into play, you could be getting a cold and your performance suffers, but it doesn't necessarily mean you haven't recovered, it just means your energy and resources are being spoken for by what the body perceives as a more urgent emergency than building a minuscule amount of muscle on your biceps.

John Little: 00:58:01 I think the key is just keep an eye on your progress charts, if you notice... It's easier to notice a slippage, now you got eight reps this week whereas the last time you worked out, you got 10, okay, something's happened here of a negative nature. But it also works the other way. If your performance increases, then something has changed within those muscles, something's in there now that wasn't in there

before. That's usually the best way to do it. But our study that we did is suggestive, at least, that maybe we don't, the majority of us, don't need to be training quite so frequently. It doesn't mean the world will stop revolving if you do periodically because I think it would take more than one week's worth of training to lead to an over-trained condition depending on the severity of the workouts that you use. But in all my years of doing this, I've never had worse results because I don't train as frequently as most people.

Lawrence Neal: 00:59:06 Yeah. You mentioned, obviously, in the book, the conservation of energy phenomenon. Just to tie that into what we're talking about for a moment, I think we're going to have to cover that in a part two just in case you want to go into detail on that. But one of the things you mentioned is how one of the problems with sticking to one routine for too long is that the body adapts and you're unable to, potentially, you're unable to recruit some of those higher order motor units muscle fibers. Obviously, continue to progress. One of the things I don't think we've really addressed on previous podcasts is how long would you stick to a single routine? Before you answer that, another thing to factor in is going back to your other point, it's really difficult to assess performance and recovery workout by workout based on the numbers. Because, like you say, there are so many variables that affect performance, there's a vast list of them.

John Little: 01:00:11 Right.

- Lawrence Neal: 01:00:13 I've been advised before by [inaudible 01:00:15], actually, when I was over there at CU recently. That, really, you want to take more of a bird's eye view of a longer term picture. You look at maybe six workouts, 12 workouts, maybe that's too much, and see how your progress is over those to identify that. In the same breath, I remember Doug McGough saying to me, "Well, it's hard to find out if you've been over training or not because your DNA hasn't taken a dump on you yet." Sorry, I've dragged that one out, but I'm just really curious, for you, how long would you stick to a specific routine for?
- John Little: 01:00:55 I don't really have a hard and fast rule on that. To me, the bigger picture is are you hitting all available fibers slow, intermediate, and fast twitch? If you're hitting fast twitch, there's certain biological side effects you're going to notice. Respiration was up considerably, the muscles are so fatigued that the person if you're doing say a leg exercise is in no hurry to go jump to his or her feet and continue. Once those symptoms disappear, what a person does is complement of repetitions and maybe you see even a rep or two and gets right off the machine or the device and moves on to the next one. To me, that is indicative that your body has not adapted in terms necessarily of having become stronger, but adapted it in terms of figuring out the exercise so that it can conserve energy. That is to say, it's able to perform what you want it to perform with less muscle fibers involved.
- John Little: 01:02:03 Because when muscle fibers are maximally involved, there are symptoms that are tangible. It's like riding your bicycle on the

flat, if you do it for, I don't know, pick a time and the 45 minutes, let's say, you're not even aware you're pedaling. You can be listening to music, if someone was riding next to you, you can engage in conversation with them. But then you come to a hill and then gravity starts to pull you down or tries to and so your muscles have to work harder against gravity. It's only a little bit up that hill, then you suddenly become aware of something that's going on in those leg muscles that you were not aware of when you were riding on the flat. You continue up the hill, and as you get closer to the summit, your legs are on fire, you might even be standing up in order to complete the revolutions of the pedals. You may have to get off, you may not be able to and then walk the bike to the summit. But when you're doing that, you notice there is a profound physiological effect that is taking place.

John Little: 01:03:07 You're sweating, your muscles are aching and burning, you're breathing very markedly and above average in terms of the breaths per second or seconds that you're doing. That's indicative that you have utilized pretty much all of the fibers that you had available for the activity. When those symptoms are absent, then something is changed and that is my benchmark when it's time probably to [crosstalk 01:03:37] protocol and then everything is all in again.

Lawrence Neal: 01:03:42 Right, okay, so that could be two workouts, that could be six workouts, it could vary.

John Little: 01:03:48 It could be six months worth of workouts, yeah, it really depends. But the key is that your body is programmed



biologically to conserve energy whenever and wherever possible. Because that has survival valued. When you remember that we come from a line of creatures that face starvation up until the turn of the last century, so energy conservation preservation was very, very important to our survival. Several things formed in our biology as a result of that. One is, the body was not going to waste energy producing more muscle tissue, which requires more energy to sustain, particularly, when the environment in which we lived at the time we would be lucky to see it yield up 800 to 1000 calories a day. Just didn't make sense for survival value, so we had a governor that was put on how much muscle mass we can build. That was why all of the research that Doug McGough brought forth regarding Myostatin was so interesting.

John Little:	01:04:52	The other thing is that two attitudes, psychologically, also were formed in us and one was if you don't have to put a large amount of energy, don't, because you may not get it back. Number two, if you come upon energy, that is food, consume it because it may not be there tomorrow. That worked wonderfully in an environment of 800 to 1000 calories a day. But take that same creature and plunk them down into today's environment where we have food abundance and it's a prescription for obesity. Don't work that hard that you're dumping lots of glucose and energy out of the muscles to be refilled at a future date. If you come upon food, consume it. That's what's happened. We know we should do something in terms of exercise because we're aware that our, in some
--------------	----------	--

cases, our bodies have changed for the worse. We either don't like the appearance or we don't like the lack of strength or stability and so we decided we should exercise.

John Little: 01:05:52 But to most people exercise is a continual, there's all of these different physical activities that we can do. On the one end, you've got this very demanding, unpleasant, brief, infrequent bout of high intensity training. At the other end, you've got a brisk walk and then you've got all of these other options in between. Typically, we try to satisfy our psyches with activities that we feel comfortable doing. We pick a mild, lower intensity like a treadmill type activity. We can do that for 20 minutes or more, we feel typically we should be doing something for an hour. If you do anything for an hour, it can't be a very high intensity activity or a very high energy output activity. If you think if I were to give you a barbell and say I want you to squat for an hour, how light would that weight have to be? It would be ridiculously light.

John Little: 01:06:50 These are the two attitudes we have to be cognizant of, that this desire not to expend energy and a desire to consume energy. We have both, I believe, we have both at a cellular level and a psychological level very strong prompts from the body saying, "Don't do it." We have to intellectually override those because we see the bigger picture and what the benefit is.

Lawrence Neal: 01:07:21 Yeah, well said.

- John Little: 01:07:24 Sorry, I was just going to say the body will adapt really quickly. I cited a study on the book with people that were walking and they measured the calories that they expended when they after the walk. Then they put these same people on an exoskeleton, which altered their gate, made it more difficult. As you might expect, the amount of calories to burn was considerably higher. The energy they were outputting, the muscle fiber involvement was much higher when they wore the exoskeleton. But the very next time they wore the exoskeleton, the calories were right back to what they were prior to their first time wearing it. The body had made the adjustment like that like instantly.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:08:05 Yeah, that's so interesting because I found out recently, so I... Sorry to cut you off, John, I want to interject with this quickly.
- John Little: 01:08:13 Yeah.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:08:13 I sprained my ankle in... When was it? Late February and I was out for three months, I didn't play any basketball at all. Then I played for the first time about two weeks ago, and it was terrible, like I was so on... I didn't have the, obviously, the basketball specific fitness and so it was incredibly exhausting for me. I was sweating more profusely, I couldn't get up and down the court as quickly. Before the session was over, I was like, "How long do we have left?" Like can we just stop now?" Then I played last Thursday and I was like almost as fit as I was before I had the injury. In terms of my ability like... Oh, yeah, and there was stealing the ball at the perimeter and fast breaks and it was right towards the end of the session. My

body had almost adapted to the activity within one week, which is just crazy. I expected to get back there [crosstalk 01:09:16] one week.

John Little: 01:09:18 Yeah, well, it's fascinating because we don't know how quickly the body adapts, but we would, no one knows, but we would presume it would have to be quickly if it's going to have survival value. How quick does it adapt? It could be as quickly as one exposure or it could be repeated exposures. I use the example of driving a standard automobile for a lot of people, a standard transmission. Because the first time most of us did that, we were exhausted. We used way more muscle than we required to do the task because our body over mobilized its forces. It was a new activity, it didn't know that we were driving, it just knew that the energy demands have gone up and that might have survival value, so it was all in. You're working the clutch, you're working the stick, you're checking the rear view mirror, you're working the gas and the brake. That when you finish, your muscles retired, you're a nervous wreck and you never wanted to drive a standard again.

John Little: 01:10:14 But you kept at it, and you did it again, you did it again, did it again. Usually within a week, you're zipping down the highway and you're not even thinking about the process. Because the body at that point only used the precise amount of motor units it required for that task and not one motor unit more. It just used those motor units in just the second that they were required as opposed to all together at once for until

the activity was over. I believe that, that carries over to any physical activity we do. People that run, they run in the winter on a treadmill, they go and do their first run in the spring and they feel like they've never run before. Their heart's blowing like a trip amour, they're sweating, they're sore, they're breathing heavily. A month later, "Oh, look at that, my pulse's down so many beats and the same route doesn't take anywhere near the amount out of me that it once did."

John Little: 01:11:08 I think they mistakenly believe that there has been some improvement in their cardiovascular system, when in reality, it's simply the body did the same thing it did when you were driving the standard automobile, which is it figured out exactly how many fibers it needed to use for the activity at just the second they were required during the movement. Instead of your heart lungs having to service the working of 100% of those tissues, it was now more on the order of about 25%. Of course, you're not going to have the same physiological symptoms. But, yeah, it's just something we need to be aware of. I don't know that it needs to be changed in perpetuity unless it's for psychological reasons, which aren't to be discounted.

John Little: 01:11:52 But that's, again, at some point given that we're going to max out our genetic potential, at that point, you're going to, whatever it is you're going to do, you want to do as little of it as is required and no more than that. You wouldn't do an extreme change like going from high intensity training once a

week to running a marathon. There would be no real upside at that point.

- Lawrence Neal: 01:12:20 Yeah, absolutely. John, I want to be respectful of your time. This has been so much fun as always, and hopefully we can do a part two and address a lot of the other sections about your book, which we won't have time to today.
- John Little: 01:12:34 Well, I apologize, because I do have a client so I do have to go but it's been a pleasure speaking with you as always, Lawrence.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:12:40 Sweet. For everyone listening, please head over to Amazon, or I guess what places is the book available, John, actually, so people know?
- John Little: 01:12:50 I think it's available on all online retailers. I know it's on amazon.uk, amazon.ca, amazon.com. It's also in most bookstores, I don't know if it's in all of them, but it is generally available. I think if you just Google The Time-Saver's Workout, you'll get some options.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:13:10 All right, and to get the blog post for this one, please go to [highintensitybusiness.com/time-saver](http://highintensitybusiness.com/time-saver), and there'll also be links there and obviously a link to the book. John, what's the best way for people to find out more about you?
- John Little: 01:13:29 Well, I don't know. I honestly don't know, or know that they would want to. We do have a website and, unfortunately, I have not memorized what it is for our fitness center. If they are interested in phone consultations, there is a page devoted

to that. But shy of that, what they need to know about me or wish to know about me can probably be found between the covers of my books, I should think.

Lawrence Neal: 01:13:57 Yeah, well, you've done free appearances on the show so people can listen to those as well and they'll all be in the show notes.

John Little: 01:14:03 Yeah, absolutely.

Lawrence Neal: 01:14:05 For everyone listening please go to [highintensitybusiness.com/podcast](http://highintensitybusiness.com/podcast) for all episodes, and until next time, thank you very much for listening.