

The Primal Blueprint Podcast – Episode 39: Interview with Vinnie Tortorich, America's Angriest Trainer

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Brad Kearns: Welcome, listeners. Brad Kearns here and I have a very special guest today: Vinnie Tortorich: "America's Angriest Trainer." Boy! Does that jump out at you on your website. Welcome, Vinnie, to the show.

Vinnie Tortorich: Thanks, Brad. Thanks for having me. This is great. The first question I know you are going to ask because I get asked it that question all the time. It is, "Why am I so angry?" I am not really angry at all, as you can tell, or maybe you think I am angry. How do you feel about it?

Brad: [00:01:17] Right now we had a few minutes of chitchat before the show and we hit it off. You had so many interesting facts. As soon as you spend a few minutes on your website, the first thing I noticed was this incredible podcast library of some 300 plus shows and the guest line up has been amazing. So the first thing I want to plug is go check out Angriest Trainer podcast on your favorite podcast channel, iTunes or whatever. You have all kinds of great guests and a lot of time with your sidekicks. So tell us a little about the podcasts.

Vinnie: The podcasts we have had for a little over two years. I literally started the podcasts because I wrote a book and then William Morris, the agent over at William Morris, read the book and said this is a great book. We went on the internet and I did not exist in the cyber world at all. That was pretty much by design. And you need to figure out to get people to know whom you are or you will never sell one book. So I wrote a blog for about two weeks and realized that no one was reading it and my nephew said to me, "You should do a podcast because I used to do radio back in the 80s in New Orleans and I had a very popular show called "Talking Fitness" and I said okay I'll do a podcast. My second question was, "What is a podcast?" because I literally didn't know what a podcast was. He said it is radio on the internet.

So about one week later, I got in touch with this girl Annabelle Chino who was an acquaintance. I didn't really know her but I learned that she did voice-over. I figured she might have a couple of mikes lying around. She might want to go on mike with me. The rest has been podcast history. We have done well over 300 shows. We have probably between 400 and 500 hours of content out there. It is a pretty popular show. It is like you said. It is kind of a who's who of fitness that has been on the show. Gary Taubes has been on. Mark has been on, your sidekick. Tim Noakes has been on about three times. Peter Attia. It is kind of a who's who of people in the fitness world who have been on the show. There have been coaches of all sorts. I don't think we have had Hal Higdon on, but we have had Joe Friel, and then we have had celebrities on. We have had Howie Mandel. We have had Minnie Driver. We have had Andrea Anders. The list goes on and on. I am shocked that a podcast can actually command that kind of guest. It really does.

Brad: Yes, that is great. You are based in LA, we should mention and have been a trainer to the LA types, including the celebrities, producers, people in Hollywood, that celebrity connection that you mentioned. Tell us about that experience. You have been down there for many years in fitness and all that is a big deal in LA, especially in Hollywood. What has your role been? What has your experience been?

Vinnie: [00:04:32] I actually talked about that in my book that came out about a years ago called, "*Fitness Confidential*." When I got here I had been a trainer in New Orleans for about almost ten years and then I

waltzed into LA not knowing a soul. I started working out with anyone and everyone I could. That led me to this really obese woman who worked at Playboy, who took a couple of hundred pounds off for free. I didn't charge her. She didn't have the money. She turned me on to some of the playmates to train them because after a playmate does the spread, Playboy now has them under contract for two years or something. The first that happens to a girl from the Midwest when you give them money is they start eating well. The last thing Playboy needed was a playmate getting fat. It just didn't work for their image. When they saw what I did with this woman, they hired me to work with some of the playmates and, as you know, playmates are kind of stepping stone to real celebrities. I became the quick weight-loss guy for the celebrities. I started getting the phone calls over and over and over and all of the sudden, I was in business in LA.

Brad: That is incredible. What a great start that you did something out of the kindness of your heart to do something for someone who wasn't going to be on the big screen any time soon but your helped someone and it led to.....I guess it would be kind of a journey many young trainers might aspire to....getting into the playmate training game.

Vinnie: Trainers call me all the time, Brad, and they ask to take me out to lunch or out for coffee or whatever and I know exactly why they are doing it. It is a good thing I like coffee and it is a good thing I like lunch because I do take every meeting. The first thing they'll ask me is, "How do you become a celebrity trainer? How do you get those people?" I will say, "Just do good work." They say, "Just tell me how to get them." My answer is, "Do good work. If people see that you are the guy....." We all walk into gyms and see people with trainers and in most cases, the trainer has more weight to lose than the client. If you see that same client six months later and the trainer is fatter and the client hasn't changed at all. That is not a good trainer. That is not a person who is doing anything. By the way, that is what I am angry about. I am angry because people's good intentions get stolen. People pay good money for advice and then they'll get the crappiest trainer in the world and nothing will happen. I tell them to just go out and do good work even if you have to do it pro bono. Just do good work. People will see that. If you get someone to lose 250 pounds that is bigger than any billboard you can hang up on Sunset Boulevard.

Brad: Wow. That is great. That is something that gets lost in the shuffle when there is so much attention paid to hustling and getting your PR rather than getting to the basic of what a trainer really is.

Vinnie: [00:07:56] I think it is like that with any business. You know if you look at trying to work on your own PR, instead of working on whom you are and what you are trying to do, you are going to lose out. Everyone is trying to sell sizzle, when, in fact, we should be selling steak.

Brad: Your comment reminds me of something Dr. Cate Shanahan said on a recent show. You go see the doctor and they are trying to dispense dietary or health advice to you and they are visibly extremely poor health. There is a little bit of a disconnect there that a trainer definitely has to walk the talk more so than probably any other career.

Vinnie: Who did you say that was?

Brad: Dr. Cate Shanahan who runs our Primal Advantage One-on-One Consulting Program. I noticed she has been a guest on your show.

Vinnie: Oh, yes. We have had her on a couple of times. We love Cate. Because when you said Cate I started thinking about Sara Gottfried who we just had on again, too. You should get her one, too. She's great.

Brad: That was a great show. I listened to part of it. You have a great thing going here. So back to the opening. Tell me about the tagline, "America's Angriest Trainer." What is the angle there?

Vinnie: The angle, if there is an angle there, is that I am not mad at you. I am not going to berate you while you are on your treadmill. That has never served anyone any good. I am actually mad for you. Because let's face it, Brad. Nobody wakes up in the morning and says, "I want to be fat. I want to be 400 pounds overweight." No one has ever said that. No one has ever said, "I want to feel like I am passing out every

time I bend over to tie my shoe." No one has ever said that. No one has ever wanted to feel crappy. Yet, against all of their good intentions to go on Jenny Craig, or Weight Watcher, or Atkins, or whatever fad diet they were on, or whatever piece of equipment they have bought from television, or whatever powder they bought at the gym that promised to give them lean muscle mass, they have been lied to. That is what makes me angry. I am not angry at you. I am angry with you and for you. That is what the show is all about. Good, bad or otherwise, I just put the truth out there. And is why I have people like Mark Sisson on the show because you guys are handing out truth and I love that stuff.

Brad: [00:10:35] So you are a friend of the primal/paleo movement and I notice you are touting here the NSNG (NO SUGARS, NO GRAINS). That is your position on diet on that show. Right?

Vinnie: Yes, NSNG. When I came up with that NO SUGARS, NO GRAINS, I wrote the book, "*Fitness Confidential*" around that. It was not unlike what Mark has done with *Primal Blueprint* or what the paleo folks are doing but also, it is not unlike what vegans are trying to do. You know vegans and paleo people are polarizing. You are either one or the other. Vegans hate the paleo group and the paleo group hates the vegans. By the way, they are both trying to do the same thing: make people better. Some how I have bridged the gap between the two. I think Mark has done a good job of doing that too because we are not telling people to just go out and eat meat and eat bacon all day and all this crazy type of dieting. Mark, just like me will tell people to eat a ton of vegetables. I eat more vegetables than I would ever eat meat. So some how, with NSNG, I have bridged that gap between the paleo people and the vegans.

Brad: You coined that. That is awesome, man.

Vinnie: Yeah, that is my thing.

Brad: It is simple, too. I talk about when primal enthusiasts, extreme enthusiasts are thrown into a social situation with regular people and we are trying to dispense a compelling sound bit or capture the essence in a nut shell, if you say, "No sugar, no grains," that would get a person thinking and taking perhaps a positive step just by reconsidering having those as a centerpiece of the diet.

Vinnie: When I sat down to write the book, I said to myself "I don't want to tell people what to eat." When you say paleo, and you know this from being paleo, the first thing people will say is, "Tell me what I can eat." I decided to tell people what they couldn't eat and then say you can go and eat everything else. That seems to work. At least it works for me and for the people who are following that movement.

Brad: [00:13:01] With these celebrity clients or all your clients, whoever you are encountering, and you are the quick weight loss guy in Hollywood, tell me about the strategy. Obviously it is NSNG and then some.

Vinnie: It is basically NO SUGARS, NO GRAINS. And I almost took that to my grave, literally, because I got very sick back in 2007. I had leukemia. It was after that that my buddy, Dean, who is a Hollywood producer. He said, "You almost died, you idiot. You need to do something with all this information." I decided that since I am going to die anyway, I might as well tell everyone how I have kept Hollywood in shape, or at least the part of Hollywood that I have been involved in. Obviously here are other trainers who do what I do. I just put it out there and that has been my big trade secret for all these years. By the way, some of these celebrities....I'll get called in and I am not going to mention any products, but let's just say it is like a Weight Watchers deal and the Weight Watchers are going to hook a big celebrity to Weight Watchers. They call people like me in to get the weight off.

Brad: Oh my God. You are destroying the fantasy, man!!

Vinnie: I am all about the truth. I am the guy who gets the calls and you would be shocked at the diet programs where I would get the call and they would also call in a chef, and they would call in all these different people. The way these celebrities will lose weight has nothing to do with the diet. All you have you do is to get people to give up sugars and grains. You don't have to get people to starve or do anything crazy. You can get people to lose weight really fast. Now look, sometimes I had a situation where they gave me five weeks to get a lot of weight of someone for a bikini shot in a movie or some type of thing. In those cases you put people into dietary ketosis and that sort of thing. That is not something I like to do

because it is hard to keep people in dietary ketosis, you know. It is not good to go in and out. It is something I have done, but not something I do all the time.

Brad: Your revealing answer reminds me of when I used to work in the supplement scene with endurance athletes and also the body builders took these products. We are all familiar with the contest where these guys go from fat and soft to unbelievably ripped and they are showing a picture in the paper that they did it in a span of eight weeks and the secret there is that it is not before and after. It is actually before and after and back to before. In other words, you take these extremely ripped guys and they sit on the couch for six weeks in the interest of winning this contest. They take a good picture when they are at their maximum and bloated and then they get back in the gym and get back to where they were before. It is pretty difficult to get into super ripped specimen coming from fat slob.

Vinnie: Yeah. The bottom line is that there is nothing healthy about what those guys are doing.

Brad: [00:16:29] Speaking of that you are big into the endurance scene, Ultra scene. I am sure you are familiar with Mark's position on that and warning against the chronic nature of extreme endurance training. It seems like you are into an angle where you can pursue these endurance goals in a healthy manner.

Vinnie: Well, I actually side with Mark. I love doing endurance events, but I will be the first to tell you that they are probably not the healthiest things you can do. I don't do them every year. I'll take whole years or even two years off and then train for a couple of events. But Mark is absolutely right. I see so many triathletes who are chronically in pain. Just chronic all the way around. These people are just tired. They are walking around in a daze, yet they think they are doing something good for themselves. I am not so sure they are doing anything good for themselves. I think Mark has a strong point there. The problem is there are guys like me who like to go out every now and then and challenge ourselves. I'll take six months or so and train for an event and do the event but after the event, I'll come right back down to being regular guy again. I see people posting every day on Facebook. "I just ran this. I posted that. I'm so cool. I just swam three miles. Look at me. I am cool." I think, "What are you doing? What is the big gain here? Where are we getting with this?" I think Mark may have a point there.

Brad: So in your case, what kind of event have you tackled? And how did you do in a manner that preserved your health?

Vinnie: Well, in a manner that preserved my health.....not so much. But I have been mostly a guy doing cycling. I started off in the 90s. I did most of the long distance, 24-hour mountain bike stuff when that was brand new. And eventually I moved on to road cycling. I was a road cyclist that whole time but I got into the long game. So that went on for years and off years. As far as trying to preserve myself during that time, sleep is the most important thing. Getting the right vital nutrients. Eating enough vegetables. Getting enough red meat. All very important. And supplementation. When I say supplementation, I am not talking about protein powder. I am talking about adding the thirteen essential vitamins and making sure I am getting the key minerals and the things you are sweating out. Things that your body is trying to get rid of. You need to get it back in.

Brad: Right and you color that well with the idea that you are in this intensive training mode. People will ask if you really need to take a vitamin? Do you really need this? Do you really need that? I think in the case the athletes pushing peak performance potential; it is definitely worth looking at.

Brad [19:54] So tell us about your book, *The Fitness Confidential*, " which we talked about briefly. I loved the subtitle which says, "Get Fit, Get Inspired, Get the Dirt, Adventures in Weight-Loss Game" I imagine your are telling the secrets of how you get the celebrities lean and mean in a short time. What else is that book all about?

Vinnie: When I read *Primal Blueprint* Mark really goes in detail as to what to eat and how to eat and when to eat it. I loved that book. With my book, I felt like people like Mark had done enough of that. I literally boiled down the NO SUGARS, NO GRAINS thing into one chapter. The rest of the book is telling you things that no one else in a fitness book as every told anyone. Things like how to not get screwed when you go to get a gym membership. How to use the free trainer they give you with the membership to your

advantage. How the insidious nature of all the junk food they have when you walk into a health club effects you. How to find a good trainer, if that is what you want. The book includes how to find a good triathlon or running coach. It goes into all sorts of details and then it tells my cancer story. Then there is an inspirational story at the end. The book has been out for well over a year now, maybe a year and a half and it still sells like hotcakes on Amazon. The book has almost 800 reviews and it still has a complete five star review on Amazon, which is crazy talk.

Brad: It is extremely highly reviewed and it is not like the "some of the author's strategies were..." Each of these reviews are very thoughtful and specific apparently from real readers that actually loved and enjoyed this book and picked out some of the things you just mentioned.

[22:00] Speaking of that, how do you find a good running or triathlon coach if you are aspiring to do some of these challenges?

Vinnie: Well, look, as you know from being a triathlete, or a former triathlete, there are more coaches then there are actually doing the sport. It seems like people who run one race, then become an expert. You look on Facebook and all of a sudden they are a coach. There is one guy who is a high school teacher who ran a couple of events and then became a triathlon coach...literally! Hung a shingle out. What these people do is they go and they get Joe Friel's book and Hal Higdon's book or Chris Carmichael's book. They will read the book and then copy the formula and call themselves a coach. My thing is why don't you just go get the book and read it yourself and you now have just as much information as the guy you are paying hundreds of dollars to every month.

Brad: That is one of the best quotes of 2014. I am going to pause the show so I can type this in: "There are more coaches than people playing the sport." It is a pretty accurate insight. One of the other quotes I like from you is reading about NO SUGARS, NO GRAINS as a cue. People are asking the usual questions like, "What about chocolate milk? Is that a good recovery food?" Do you want me to say the quote or do you know it by heart?

Vinnie: You go ahead.

Brad: Vinnie's answer is: #@\$%^&%^% chocolate milk. Chocolate milk is loaded with sugar. So you are a straight shooter, man. I appreciate it and the flavor that you bring to the training game that often seems to be overloaded with seriousness and self-importance. It seems like you are a pretty open and approachable guy and it comes out in your podcasts and your book. So let's make sure people get to know you by visiting: vinnietorich.com America's Angriest Trainer. And definitely subscribe to the America's Angriest Trainer podcast. The guest list is unsurpassed. You have some great ones in there. I noticed Mark Allen.... I am going to listen to that one. He's the all-time great triathlete. You got Tim Olsen who is winning those ultra endurance marathons and subscribing to primal/paleo lifestyle. You mentioned Timothy Noakes, probably the preeminent exercise physiologist in the world who has made great waves in his scientific community by transitioning away from the boilerplate of many years to now embrace this low-carb primal/paleo style in the endurance scene.

What have been your most memorable moments with guests on the podcast?

Vinnie: GOD! There are so many of them. There have been so many memorable moments. Having Mark on was a really cool thing. I'm not just blowing smoke. Getting Peter Attia on was pretty big deal. He gave a lot of great information. If people really want a good show to listen to, go back in the archives. You can buy the shows for two bucks or something to download all 500 hours. Gary Taubes. I had Tim Olsen was a good guest. Also Zach {??last name??} He eats a paleo style diet and he has a 12-hour running record here in the United States. He does it all with no sugar. He's a great guy. He has been on a couple of times. Mark Allen has been on a couple of times. I think he was a reluctant guest the first time he came on but now he calls us to come back on. He has been on four times now. He is also a great guest. I could go on and on with these people. We love them all. They all come on and I can't get enough of them.

Brad: Hey, Vinnie Tortorich, thanks for joining us on the *Primal Blueprint* podcast from Los Angeles and we will talk to you soon, listeners. Thanks so much for listening. I am your host, Brad Kearns. Have a great day.