



Episode 42 Transcript

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Living Lean with Alpha M

Nick Collias: Gentlemen, and ladies, welcome to *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast*. I'm Nick Collias, an editor at Bodybuilding.com. To my right here, we have Heather Eastman, an editor here as well as a physique coach and judge; and we're also lucky to have with us, one Aaron Marino, you may know him better as [Alpha M](#). He has a massively popular [YouTube channel](#) that discusses all things male: lifestyle optimization, fitness, nutrition, manscaping ...

Aaron Marino: Manscaping, that's right.

Nick: ... style, essential skills, a little of everything. And he's also the head of a couple of other companies: [Pete & Pedro](#), which is a haircare company, and [Tiege Hanley](#), which is uncomplicated skincare for men.

Aaron Marino: Skincare for men, yes, yes.

Nick: But more to the point, he is here because he's filming a new fitness program with Bodybuilding.com All Access, titled, [Alpha M's Tailored: Six Weeks to Living Lean](#). Aaron Marino, great to have you here.

Aaron Marino: Thanks for having me guys, I'm so excited, it's great to be here.

Nick: So, I want to talk fitness with you because you have a great and deep fitness background that's pretty fundamental to who you are, it seems like, but I also wanted to talk a little bit about Alpha M first, because I love this idea of happy, healthy, well-adjusted, confident men, those are

words straight from your website. But, at the same time, as I creep along into my thirties, late thirties, I see how rare those things are. It's not easy being a man in this day and age.

Aaron Marino: It's not, is it?

Nick: No. I just ran into an acquaintance last night and he was talking about all of his dreams but he was lacking in just the basics of self-care. I went home and told my wife, "God, it's harder to find a guy who knows how to take care of himself these days."

Aaron Marino: Absolutely.

Heather Eastman: True dat.

Nick: So, describe to me when you decided to start speaking to that issue and what made you think you were the one to do that?

Aaron Marino: What made me think I was the one? I had a video camera and a big mouth and that was pretty much ...

Nick: That's the start.

Aaron Marino: That was the start of everything, right?

Heather: What else do you need?

Aaron Marino: I had no idea.

Nick: That's all we have.

Aaron Marino: It's funny. It's style and grooming is always something I've been really into from a young age. My mom tells the story of me, first day of kindergarten, not wanting to go with wide-legged pants and so I wrapped a roll of scotch tape to make sure that they were a little more tapered. I mean, this is how deep this goes, right?

Nick: Like a *Leave It to Beaver* episode.

Aaron Marino: Exactly. And so it's always been something I've always been interested in. Got into fitness, my fitness center didn't exactly work out. It destructed. It was horrible experience, which we can talk about a little bit later if you want to. But, yeah, my wife gave me a video camera. One of the things that I did at the fitness center was help this guy. He had a date and he's like, "Hey, I don't know what to wear. I don't know what I should do." This is great! Let me take you shopping, and while we're at it, your nose hairs are nuts and we gotta go to the salon because your hair is dreadful.

I didn't realize it then, but I was setting the foundation of a business, which was image consulting. This was back in 2006 and so it was a while ago, people knew [Queer Eye for the Straight Guy](#), but this is something I've always been very comfortable ... I've always been somebody comfortable in my own skin, and I'm not afraid to talk about some things that, I guess, you don't really hear your dad or your uncle, or you're kind of embarrassed to ask your buddies, "What do you do with the hair ..." And

so I felt very comfortable and so my wife gave me a video camera in 2008 and I thought, "Maybe there are other guys out there that maybe have questions or have experienced that maybe I can share with them. And so that's how it started and it just kind of rolled from there."

Nick: So what were your initial videos or what were the first ones that really came to you, like, "This is what I really want to speak to"?

Aaron Marino: No, at first it was all about style and it's funny because it's so hard for me to watch some of my old videos. I mean, I've been doing this now for 10 years. Looking back, I was a train wreck. I was sitting there very proper, I was talking about style, I was talking about how to tie a Windsor knot, I was talking about what buttons you should button on your jacket. But then, slowly, as I saw some of the comments, I started talking about grooming, and then etiquette, and then relationships. And so it sort of has evolved, over the course of the past 10 years, to encompass pretty much anything that I think people would find interesting and things that I've struggled with or have faced at some point in my life.

Nick: Sure, sure. And when did you feel like, "Wow, this kind of has potential. This isn't just me anymore. This is something that actually has momentum, that could really move"?

Aaron Marino: Yeah, you know, I guess it was, I guess about five years ago, when all the sudden, it kind of just, it was this weird moment where it hit me that, "Wait a second, this is kind of bigger than me." And it's funny, but YouTube has made me be a better person, just because I would see what was out there in terms of role models and I realized that, "Wait a second, there are guys out there that are actually looking up to me." And I don't want to be that guy that says one thing and does something else and so a lot of my earlier videos, when I was just getting started on YouTube, I thought I needed to be a certain way. I thought I needed to be crude, I thought I needed to be a little bit edgy, because that's what was popular back then. That's what was getting views. And so I tried to do that and it was embarrassing that I sort of portrayed myself in that manner and so it was around five years ago when I realized what people respond to is authenticity and just being you. And people can smell when you're being fake and so it was really a sort of an epiphany and everything has kind of skyrocketed since then.

Nick: Sure, and I've heard that from other people who had started their own podcasts or really tried to get into vlogging and things like that. They said, "I looked back on the first thing and production values are one thing, but also, I was just kind of an asshole back then ..."

Aaron Marino: Yeah.

Nick: "... and I felt like I had to be."

Aaron Marino: Yeah.

Nick: And I know people who go back, they delete their old videos for that reason.

Aaron Marino: Yup.

Nick: But I was sharing some of your videos with somebody recently and he was looking at the titles and he was like, "Okay, I was expecting this guy to be a jackass."

Aaron Marino: Yeah, no everybody thinks I'm a huge douche ...

Nick: But then he watched and he said, "You know what, he actually, not only does he seem like a really nice guy, but he's putting the right sort of behaviors out there. He's not telling you, it's not like Tom Cruise in Magnolia, or something like that.

Aaron Marino: Yeah. No, no no.

Nick: "Or he's telling you basically to be totally aggressive, be on attack, but he's actually cultivating great behaviors." And that's one thing I like about it is you're trying to, yeah, there's a role model in there.

Aaron Marino: That's it. I'm ...

Heather: And also like just straight-up positivity. The one I kind of took notes on was "Why Being Short is Better Than Being Tall." And I loved it, because ...

Aaron Marino: And that was one of the things, where, and I get some crap for ...

Nick: Of course.

Aaron Marino: ... the fact that I call it "Alpha M." Well, that was just this weird sort of accident how it came to be called "Alpha M" and I'm not what you would typically think of as an alpha male. I'm not 6'2", 250 pounds. I'm 5'6", 150 pounds, I'm a little guy. But I really felt like in today's world, you need a different set of skills in order to sort of dominate and kick life's ass. And so I wanted to be sort of that voice, or one of the voices, in terms of letting guys know that it's okay if you're not "this." You can still be "this" and be awesome.

Aaron Marino: And so the video that you're referencing in terms of "Why Being Short is Better Than Being Tall," that was really just to let short guys out there that have and suffer from self-esteem, because you'd be amazed, I've always been pretty confident with myself and haven't ever felt like, "Ooh, I'm super short." It's never really bummed me out. I've always dated girls that I thought were pretty and I've been successful in whatever area I pretty much chose. But there are a lot of guys that that affects them so deeply and so I just wanted to put something out there that's like, "Hey, being short's awesome."

Heather: Yeah.

Nick: But height is also one of those things where men can just kind of look at it and think, "Okay, this is who I am," right? And anything else in their life, it's so easy, especially as you get a little bit older, to think, "I'm not really gonna grow anymore. I have a certain identity, I have a certain skill set, and it is what I have." But it seems like, in your videos, you're saying, "Look for opportunities ...

Aaron Marino: Yeah.

Nick: ... to cultivate something different." You actually can keep moving forward.

Aaron Marino: You can be anything and I am firm believer.

Nick: Even in your thirties and forties.

Aaron Marino: Yeah. You can be anything you want. You just gotta get out of your own way a lot of times. And ultimately, it does, it boils down to confidence. If there was a word that I can sort of summarize what the content I try to put out, it's about confidence.

Heather: Right.

Aaron Marino: Because when you feel good about yourself, anything else is possible. And that goes for men, it goes for women, children, pretty much anybody. And so that's what I strive for. Sometimes I hit it, sometimes I don't.

Nick: Sure.

Aaron Marino: And we're all trying to learn.

Nick: So now, where did fitness fit into your vision?

Heather: Yes, tell us about that.

Aaron Marino: Yeah.

Nick: You have a great fitness background but you certainly don't speak to fitness in every video.

Aaron Marino: No, no, no. Fitness is my love. It's my first love. Just to give you a little weird back story, when I was twelve years old, my mom gave me a membership to a gym. And I come from a pretty tough ... I had some crappy stepfathers and so my home life wasn't the best but when I was at the gym, I found myself, and I felt confident, and I felt good. And so from the age of 12, I knew that that's what I wanted to do with my life. And so from that age, I decided I was gonna run a fitness center. And the only thing that meant success for me was to own a chain of nutrition stores, and fitness centers and all this

Nick: Empire.

Aaron Marino: And so that was it, that was the goal, that was, there was nothing else in this world that would fulfill me, and so fast forward, graduate from college, I open up a few nutrition stores. That was great but my business partner, he was not the ideal business partner and we didn't jive in terms of ethics. It's funny because I joked that I knew at that point that I would be popular in prison, I wouldn't thrive in prison. So, I needed to separate from him. I met a woman, I helped her lose 100 pounds. And she said, "Hey, I want to help other people do this. Would you want to open a personal training studio with me?" And it was like, jackpot, this is it.

Aaron Marino: And so, did that a few years, tried to expand into a group fitness facility, I was competitive natural bodybuilder for a few years, I won Natural Nationals in the SNBF, it's a southern, small, little, nothing-you've-heard-of organization.

Heather: We'll look it up.

Aaron Marino: But it was something that it's always just been what I've been passionate about. And

so when I started the image consulting, fitness has always been a part of my life. It's something I do every single day. It's just, it's who I am. And I truly feel that working out was the single best decision I've ever made in my life because it is the single thing that has impacted my self-esteem in a positive way, like nothing else could. And so, fitness, is just, it's always been part of me, and so being able to evolve Alpha M into a little bit more fitness and give some more advice is something that I just love and my guys love as well.

Nick: Yeah.

Aaron Marino: Because I'm not, they don't see me as a fitness expert.

Nick: Right.

Aaron Marino: But I do have a deep knowledge ...

Heather: Right.

Aaron Marino: ... and experience with it.

Heather: And nutrition as well.

Aaron Marino: Sure, and they may be surprised to learn that you were a competitive bodybuilder.

Nick: Yeah.

Heather: Yeah.

Nick: What do the rigors of that really give you? I mean we've had many competitive bodybuilders on the podcast. What do you feel like that experience left you with?

Aaron Marino: You know, it was funny. I loved competing. And I was competitive wrestler, I did all the competition things. And so I was needing something to scratch my itch and I just always loved working out and developing an aesthetic physique, basically, and so ... No, it was amazing. It's funny because I tell people that the one day that you look your best, you feel your worst. It is ...

Heather: Yes, very true.

Aaron Marino: It is incredibly hard on you. I mean, everything, from your mood to your sex drive ... When I was competing, when it was getting down, I didn't want sex, I wanted a pizza, right? That was it. And so ...

Heather: It's like, give me the water bottle.

Aaron Marino: Yeah, exactly. But for me it was something that, I think, I did that for a while, and then my, sort of, my, I don't know, I guess lost interest a little bit, but I still love looking good and feeling good and confident with my shirt off.

Nick: Sure. Did you have an icon or a specific bodybuilder that really spoke to you and said, "Okay this is kind of, this is the way to approach this."

Aaron Marino: I love all the old-school guys like Frank Zane. I grew up, I'm 41 years old, and so I grew up reading Flex and Muscle & Fitness. And so, it's the Rich Gasparis and all those guys, the Flex Wheelers. It was before the, what is it, Franco, Francisco Benefe- ... what is his name? Francis Benefe- [Francis Benfatto], he's an Italian guy. You know who I'm talking about?

Heather: Yeah, I know who you're talking about but I don't want to butcher his name.

Aaron Marino: He had great hair, real aesthetic. He wasn't huge but I love that whole Frank Zane sort of small waist, nice wide shoulders, just very aesthetic. I was ...

Nick: Where you're allowed to have hair. I think everyone looks like a bullet now.

Heather: Right. Everyone's ... yeah ... No one has hair anymore. I love that you're coming at bodybuilding from kind of an image-consulting perspective because that's how I got into coaching. And coaching competitors is ... People would train for weeks and weeks and months on end and then they'd show up and not know how to walk in heels, not know how to pose, not know that they needed to tan, and it's like, "Come on. There's so much more that goes into it besides lifting heavy things." So, in this program that you're designing with us, are kind of gonna throw some of those little tips on how to look good?

Nick: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Heather: Okay.

Aaron Marino: So, the program, it was really amazing developing this program. They sort of ... Bodybuilding was like, "Hey. Six weeks. Diet, nutrition, working out, it's yours. Do what you do and what you would recommend." It's a lot of working out. There's a six-week program, which is pretty intense, but you can modify it based on your experience level and how intensely you want to work out. There's diet. But then, I also go into some of the other components. The lifestyle hacks, the grooming, the style tips. Just so that it's a more well-rounded approach to just feeling incredible and looking great.

Nick: Sure, sure. Yeah, no, that's one thing I really like about it. It feels like it's the foundation of kind of a whole-life revamp.

Aaron Marino: Yeah, absolutely.

Nick: So now, is the weight room for you, is it a community place or is it a place where you go to figure stuff out on your own? Are you a lone wolf in that space or are you out there talking? What is that space for you?

Aaron Marino: As far ... No, no, no. I love working out just by myself. Put my earphones in. It's a time for me just to kind of be by myself and do my thing. But that being said, there are two guys that I'm great friends with that I work out ... I meet a few days a week to work out, but then I'll usually come back in the evening or something and do something else, and so ...

Nick: Oh, okay.

Heather: Do your own thing? Yeah.

Aaron Marino: It's a little bit of both. But I love the community aspect of it. I love the fact that everybody's there to do the same thing. And that is just feel great about themselves.

Nick: Sure, yeah. But at the same time, I mean, looking back at my own teen years, I remember the weight room being this place where other men went and it seemed like they wanted me out of there. And there are a lot of people who look at that place and they have trouble trusting it, or they have trouble feeling comfortable there. What do you say to a guy like that who sees the value, the writing's on the wall. Right?

Aaron Marino: Secure. Yeah. You know, one of, I think, the biggest reasons why people don't start that program or don't end up in the gym is because they're scared of what the other people in there will think. And the perception of, "I don't wanna look like I'm new. I don't wanna ... all these big muscular guys that know more than me." The truth is, is that they don't care about you. They do not ...

Heather: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Aaron Marino: They're not worried about what you're doing. They're so focused on themselves. And my experience is everybody in there will help. If you've got a question, it's no sweat off of anybody's back to answer a question, or ... Just go. Get yourself there. That is the hardest place to start in that first step of just going there. But you do it enough times, eventually, you'll feel comfortable and it'll change your life.

Nick: And that sounds like a great life lesson to get from the gym. What are other lessons you feel like the gym has really passed along to you?

Aaron Marino: Life lessons for me?

Nick: Yeah.

Aaron Marino: Oh, my goodness. That's a ... You should've given me more time with that. Just that nothing great was ever accomplished because it was easy. If you want to change, you've got to do the work, period. That means not only in the gym. If you want to change your body, you've got to change things, but it's only you. It's you, it's the weights, there's nobody else that can help you if you're not willing to put in the time, put in the work.

Aaron Marino: And that's not just for fitness and your physique. That's with life, with your career, with your relationships, with your style, with your grooming, everything. You've got to be willing to do the work in order to achieve great things.

Nick: Over and over.

Aaron Marino: And over and over and over.

Heather: Well, and one thing you say, that you kind of end with, is that you don't sell products, you sell confidence. So, to those people who are listening and saying, "Yeah, but I don't think that I could ever do something like that." I mean that's basically saying, "I don't have the confidence to do that."

What's some one thing you can say to just kind of nudge them over the edge there?

Aaron Marino: You know, the thing I would say, and the way I kind of approach things these days is, failure ... it sucks, right? Everybody's failed. Everybody's experienced disappointment. But what's worse to me ... Once you fail, it's like, okay, you pick yourself up, it's okay. You will heal. You will get over it. You'll get better. But the one thing that I don't want to live this life with is regret. Because I think that is the thing that, for me, eats at me. When I think, "I could have, I should have, if I only would have tried. I think I might have, but I don't know."

Aaron Marino: And so, living a life without regret ... Think of how long you've been thinking about doing something physically for yourself. Has it been six months? Has it been a year? Where would you have been now if you would have started then, when you first thought about it? And so, just, there's no better time. You can ... You're gonna re- ... I don't know. Just don't live life with regret. It's too short. You never know when it's over and just go after it.

Nick: No, that makes sense. I remember a few years ago there was a trail race here. A 10-mile race. I'd never run 10 miles before. I thought, "I'm gonna try it just to see how it is." Because otherwise, I'd feel some regret about not doing it. I did it and I came in dead last, right? And, whatever. I got to the end and I had this moment where I thought, "Okay, I just came in totally last place. How do I feel about that?" And it was completely liberating. I thought, "I don't give a shit." Right?

But having that experience and just knowing, "Alright now, come back and keep doing it over and over again. You come in last place, nobody cares anymore. We're all adults now. We're not in junior high anymore."

Aaron Marino: Absolutely.

Nick: It's a fantastic feeling.

Aaron Marino: It is.

Nick: And yet, just do nothing but work.

Nick: Now tell us about your nutritional approach a little bit. Are you a "eat like a bro" guy, or ...

Aaron Marino: I'm not sure what "eat like a bro" means.

Nick: That means putting tilapia in the microwave.

Heather: Tupperware containers. Yeah.

Nick: You ever ...

Heather: Yeah.

Aaron Marino: I'm a realist in terms of if it's not convenient, if you're not willing to, or able to sort of maintain something, you're not going to do it long term. And so my approach to fitness, my approach to this lifestyle that we all love is ... You've got to have a happy balance. You've got to be able to make smart choices. It really does boil down to planning and preparation. That's not just for your

weekly meals. But that's for going out to eat. It's very tough to wing a diet program because a lot of times you have no idea what they're actually putting in your food when you're eating out. So, I'm a fan of preparing in advance. In terms of Tupperware, I don't think you necessarily need to do that.

Nick: The full meal prep routine.

Aaron Marino: I think that if you can do that, if you're somebody who will do that, dedicating two hours on a Sunday to cooking your meals and putting some things so that you have them ready, I think absolutely you should do, if you can. But if not, understanding and knowing the best alternatives if you can't do that. And so

Nick: So, I'm hearing behaviors more than numbers, not counting grams of things.

Aaron Marino: I have no idea ... I have never ... I have no idea how many calories I eat. I have never counted, ever. It's just eat clean, you know your body, you'll learn your body and ...

Heather: That makes me so happy.

Aaron Marino: I have no idea what macros I'm getting ...

Heather: I hate counting calories more than anything in the world.

Nick: So, now, what do you feel like the toughest part of "Tailored" is going to be for somebody who maybe has some weight room experience, but not a ton?

Aaron Marino: Consistency. I think the consistency is going to be the toughest thing. I mean, this is six weeks. It's not an easy six weeks. It's going to test people. You're gonna be sore, but you gotta just keep doing it. I think that a lot ... one of the other aspects that's going to be difficult for people is doing a little bit of cardio. I'm a big fan of cardio and incorporating cardiovascular exercise. And if you're a guy, and you're just used to going in, banging out some curls and some bench press and leaving, it's gonna be tough to ... Hey, I want you doing some cardio in your target zone. Because that's a great way to get into those fat stores and use fatty acids as energy. And so, I think cardio is gonna be a challenge for some people. But once you get into it, it's a great opportunity to watch YouTube videos, to catch up on podcasts, and to just be by yourself in your zone.

Nick: No, I think that's a good point. Yeah. The boredom of cardio really does catch people a lot of times. So, you use that as an opportunity to catch up on things that maybe you wouldn't be partaking of otherwise?

Aaron Marino: Absolutely, yeah, no, like content. That's when I watch my YouTube videos. Not mine, but other people's YouTube videos. That's when I ...

Nick: I kind of like the idea of you on the treadmill ... We look over your shoulder and you're watching yourself.

Aaron Marino: It's funny because I have had awkward experiences where I'll just film a video, and usually I like to sit on it, and then watch the next day. And people would be like, "Wait, are you watching you?" I'm like, "Yeah."

Heather: Don't worry about it.

Aaron Marino: I'm not as big of an egomaniac as you imagine, but, yes.

Nick: So how many of those 3.5 million subscribers are just ghost accounts that you've created to watch yourself?

Aaron Marino: Three. 3 million of them, yeah. Exactly. That's what I spend my day doing.

Heather Eastman: You have .5 going for you, so ... that's good.

Aaron Marino: Yeah, I'm good.

Nick: Well, Alpha M, that's "alpha m." on [YouTube](#). Seems like the easiest point of entry to find you for most people.

Aaron Marino: Yeah.

Nick: But, we also have this great program that's gonna come out imminently on Bodybuilding.com [All Access](#). It's called, "Alpha M's Tailored: Six Weeks to Living Lean." Aaron Marino, thanks for coming and talking to us.

Aaron Marino: Thanks, guys, this is amazing. Appreciate it.

Nick Collias: I can't wait to try it.



[ALPHA M'S TAILORED: 6 WEEKS TO LIVING LEAN](#)

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