

An interview with world-renowned martial artist and strength and conditioning specialist, Steve Cotter.

By Charlotte Ord

CO Hi Steve and thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview.

SC It's my pleasure.

CO Could you start by telling me a bit about yourself and your sporting background?

SC Ok, my name is Steve & I'm a Capricorn, and I have an interesting life! I have a family, three children, and I live in San Diego, California. I've been involved in physical training for pretty much my whole life. I was athletic as a child and when I was 12 years old I moved to California from the East coast, and I became involved in traditional martial arts training, Chinese martial arts, and that became really the focus of my life from the age of 12 until the age of about 26. I was teaching professionally, many different people, youth programmes, tai chi programmes, older people, martial arts to adults, and that was really all day every day for a period of many years. After I'd been involved in the arts for 7 or 8 years I started get involved in the full contact and eventually full contact fighting competitions in the States, and had good success, myself and the school I was with. We went to national competitions and I personally won two U.S national titles in full contact kung fu fighting, the sport Kuoshu, which is a type of sport that's like fighting in a ring without ropes. There was a movie years ago by Jean-Claude Van Dame called Bloodsport and they sort of were depicting this traditional sport which they call Lei tai fighting; lei tai is a platform. So that was my primary sporting background as far as formal training was concerned, mainly in martial arts and also the full contact fighting component of that. My martial arts training also included a lot of meditation and Qigong which is a deep breathing component. In addition I did some of the Chinese medicine, bone setting, massage, and things like that. I also learnt the use of certain herbal tinctures and liniments.

CO Cool. That sounds like an incredible foundation. So how did you get into kettlebell training?

SC Well, in 1996 I went from teaching martial arts full time to having a change of heart and deciding that wasn't what I was going to do for the rest of my life, I didn't want that to be my business and profession any longer; I had seen that sometimes people would change when they became involved in the business and would lose love for the art and I didn't want that to happen to me, so I decided I wanted to continue to teach martial arts out of passion but make my money in a different way. So I became interested at that point in going to college full time, so to answer your question about kettlebells, after I'd been a full time college student for about three years I noticed that my conditioning was starting to deteriorate and I went from being a world class athlete who was training all day every day to being a person carrying a backpack who really wasn't training very much at all, and I didn't like the changes my body was making. So I was really wanting to get back to very elite type of conditioning but I no longer had the time or the inclination to train all day every day,

and I also didn't have my involvement with the martial art community so I really was kind of on my own and I was looking for ways to increase my fitness to a very high level but be able to do it in much less time. It dawned on me that I had to learn to accomplish the same amount of work, or a lot of work, in much less time and be smarter about how I used my time. There's a saying that when the student is ready the teacher will appear and so you could say that the kettlebell appeared, as a way to teach me how to use my time more efficiently and achieve a high level of fitness.

I came across kettlebells in a martial art catalogue and they intrigued me as they talked about using the body as a whole unit and how it was complimentary to martial artists and military athletics, so inherently it made a lot of sense to me. I was a little prohibited at first because I didn't have any money so the kettlebells were too expensive for me, but after having investigated them for a few months I finally decided that I had a chance to try them and once I'd tried it once I was hooked and came up with the money to buy some kettlebells. I began training myself with them using Pavel's (Tsatsouline) first kettlebell DVD back in 2002 and that was the beginning. I then started integrating kettlebells with personal training that I was starting to do professionally and had great results; I was really getting back into a much higher level of fitness again, I loved the way it felt and the dynamic expression and it just went from there.

CO Excellent. And what do you consider to be unique about kettlebell training?

SC As far as unique benefits go there are a couple of main things. For one thing, the more traditional training protocols tend to segregate the different energy systems, so typically the formula would be that people would do their resistance training two or three days a week and then they would do their cardiovascular and cardio-respiratory fitness training, aerobics, separately, and still even flexibility they would have to separately, so these types of things take up a lot of time. So one of the unique things about kettlebells is that it really combines these facets into one protocol so you can work resistance training, cardio-respiratory fitness and range of motion therapy all at one time with one tool and even with one movement or just a few movements.

CO I think that's a huge benefit for a lot of people given the nature of today's hectic lifestyles. So I recently attended your certification course in Edinburgh, Scotland, which was brilliant by the way!; what led you create the IKFF and who is it for?

SC Ok so there's a couple of things that went behind the formation of the IKFF. First of all, I've always loved teaching. I was able to be in teaching since I was 15, that was when I started teaching martial arts professionally, so I had the opportunity to teach many different people of all different backgrounds, and I loved just being in front of groups and directing them. My passion was in the whole physical culture, so I did have experience in teaching for many years before I came to kettlebells. After getting involved with kettlebells for a few years I developed some DVDs and then later on I was approached by a martial art DVD manufacturer who was interested in developing a comprehensive kettlebell DVD called the Encyclopaedia of Kettlebell Lifting, and once I did that my visibility started to increase and I was starting to become more well known, and I was able to sell my DVD in various markets internationally. So as a result of that I was getting various enquiries via email from folks who were asking if I would be offering my own certification, and also giving good feedback on the teaching approach that I offered on the DVDs. So that was what first planted the seed that there was genuine interest in it. However, it took me several years to finally come up with the IKFF. The reason I finally came up with the IKFF, and I want to be quite frank about the certification

process, is that there are a lot of various certifications in all industries and fitness is no different, and a lot of times I see certifications simply as ways of charging people more money for the same thing and by calling it a certification they are able to charge more money than they would if they didn't call it a certification. So I resisted creating a certification initially because of that, because I didn't feel that that was a reason to do something. I have no aversion to money but I do have an aversion to taking advantage of people and for a long time I didn't see the need for it because I was already teaching and already offering workshops. However the enquiries persisted and as time went on I observed that the existing kettlebell certifications courses were lacking in the area of member support, that it really seemed to exist for the people that were running the show, for their benefit, but for the fitness professionals who were paying their money to attend the course, they were still on their own and weren't really getting the support necessary to develop their own professional interests. So that was one of the primary reasons for starting the IKFF, I wanted it to be member centred and member based, not just about myself and my success but really to be able to help individuals to build their own professional career doing something that they loved, and trying to develop a federation that could support their growth in that regard. The other reason is simply that I recognised there was more and more interest for kettlebell certification and I felt that I could do a better job than those that were already doing it, so I felt that since people were going to get certified anyway I might as well be offering certification because I felt that I had their long term interests in mind as well as doing a very good job teaching them.

The reason I came up with the name for the IKFF (International Kettlebell Fitness Federation) was that I wanted it to be international, it's a global effort and I think that the world has changed; we're no longer limited to our local marketplace and the internet has really made that possible. The K, standing for kettlebell, obviously is a major component of the programme that we have; F being for fitness and kettlebells obviously being a component of that, and the final F for Federation, which really means that it's focused on the membership itself. The IKFF was really designed to not just be able to be a high quality kettlebell instructor training programme but also a comprehensive programme which expresses my complete experience and what I view as a holistic approach to training my body spirit, via kettlebells, and other protocols; Qigong and martial arts, joint mobility and flexibility, as well as body control via bodyweight conditioning. So these are what I call the five pillars, the five facets of fitness and well-being, and they are really what the IKFF is all about.

CO Great. Now I know one of the reasons many people are inspired by you are your pretty incredible feats of strength and flexibility, and you were saying on the course how your trademark move is the pistol squat on and off a table. How did you first discover you could do that and how did it become so synonymous with you?

SC Well, the interesting story about that is it almost happened by accident. The history really is that what people now call the pistol, the marketed term, we've known for years in Chinese martial arts as the crane dip, is basically the one-legged squat that you're referring to as the pistol, and that's an integral part of basic conditioning. It's the ability to be powerful and flexible on one leg. So as a boy at the beginning of my martial arts training at 12, that was part of the basic training protocol. When I was 13 years old I broke my wrist playing American football, just tossing the ball with one of my older brothers. Stupidly I didn't get an x-ray or go to the doctors so I just assumed it was sprained and would get better but it didn't get better. Chinese medicine is exceptional for many things so I was using Chinese herbs and things to try and heal it, but little did I know there was an actual

fracture there, so while I was doing the martial arts and things the hand just kept getting traumatised and it was getting worse and worse, and finally after a couple of months I went to get an x-ray and it turned out there was an actual fracture so I couldn't do a lot of things in the arts. But I continued to train everyday, but while the other students would be doing push ups I would be doing the one legged squat and while they were blocking kicks I would be doing one legged squat! So it got to the point where I would be doing hundreds of these in my training and over the years it just became something I became very good at because of the concentrated effort. In martial arts in particular we learn to train around injury, so if your arm is broken then you use your other arm and if you can't train your arms then you train your legs, and if your legs are injured you train your abs, so you're always working around and you take something that is a drawback and turn it into an advantage. So I used my wrist getting broken as a way to really strengthen my legs.

The table jumps came because I did many, many years and thousands and thousands of reps on the ground. When I discovered I could actually do it jumping on and off a table was about four years ago now. I was giving a lecture in Las Vegas and my topic was discussing the use of force in athletics. My point was mostly focused on the fact that athletics is largely based on force production and that would be jumping higher, running faster, hitting harder, but I wanted to focus also on another aspect which was the force reduction component. You know there's always yin and yang, always balance, for every up there's down, so whereas the focus in athletics is usually on the production component, my talk was really on how to reduce forces. So I had planned going into the conference to use the pistol squat to illustrate the segmented absorption of force through the lower body so that first the ankle, then the knee, then the hip, then your spine is absorbing the force over time. Between each speaker there was a fifteen minute break, so when the speaker before me was finished and I had some time to prepare, I went up on the stage the presenters were speaking from, and while I was going through the material I had the thought occurred to me that 'hmm, I wonder if I could actually jump off the stage into a pistol, as that would be quite a dynamic demonstration.' And it was really something I wanted to do to get them to pay attention to what I was saying by using a very physical demonstration. But I'd never done that before and it was about a 5 foot drop, so first I went over to the steps leading up to the stage and I jumped down off the lowest step into the full one leg squat and that was no problem, so then I went up each step at a time no problem and I thought 'Ok I can do this.' So then I went to the stage and tried it and I was able to jump down into the squat. So I was in the demonstration talking about this force production and force reduction and how we're absorbing forces, and demonstrated the pistol, and while I was talking I just very nonchalantly strolled off the stage and landed in the one legged pistol and that really got everyone's attention and was obviously a very dynamic expression. So that was the first time I ever jumped down but I didn't jump up, it was a 5 foot stage! But jumping down was not a problem at all, there was quite a lot of force there but I had I had a strong foundation in the movement and I knew how to align my body to absorb the force. So then a year later in 2006 I was in Denmark, I was affiliated with Pavel at this time and was one of the senior instructors on his course and it was the first time he had ever had a course in Europe, and one of the participants came up to me and said she'd heard that I could jump down off a ledge into a pistol, and I said that yes I could, and she asked if I thought I could jump up too, and I said 'I don't know I've never tried.' But I thought it'd be good to give it a go so we went inside where there was a standard picnic table kind of thing and I looked at it and thought, 'well that stage was 5 foot and this is only about 3 foot so this is nothing,' but I hadn't jumped up yet. So anyway, I did it, and she filmed it, and then later there was a guy doing a documentary there and word got around that I'd done it and they asked if they could film it again, and that video

became circulated on the internet where I was jumping up and down three or four times, and so because of the viral marketing effect of the internet and it being up there on You Tube, there was a hundred thousand views and it got to the point where whenever I was doing the seminars people would ask if I'd show that, so I got to the point where I was doing, what I call, this stupid human trick, at all these courses, jumping up and down off of tables! So that's how I became known for that but I always tell people that that's not an exercise that I practice and it's not something that I recommend; it's actually very volatile and it's actually based still on basic movement and just getting very well developed in the basic movement.

CO Sure. Steve one of the things that really fascinated me when I attended your course was the quite significant difference between the 'hard style' of kettlebell training that I learnt during my original certification here in the UK, and the competition style that you taught. What would you say are the main reasons for using one over the other?

SC That's a really good question. The first thing I'd like to say about that is that my first role is as an educator, my role is not to pass my personal agenda, my role is to get the best possible information, I am always a student first, first and foremost even though I view myself as a teacher, so it is my obligation to be willing to improve when I have new information and sometimes we have to be willing to throw away old information if it doesn't serve us, or if we find something that works better. So when it comes to kettlebells there's this sort of interpretation that there's different styles, and really that is more of a marketing driven division. In reality if there's such a thing as a style it has more to do with individual body types. By that I mean if someone is short and stocky they have different levers than someone who is tall and thin. So you'll see stylistic differences in the way that they move their body, and in the way that is the most efficient path for that person to use. But the idea that there are different styles of kettlebell lifting is really, in my opinion, something that has been created in America as something that is a way to differentiate the business model. The reason I believe that is kettlebell lifting in itself is quite simple, it's very natural, and once someone learns the basic techniques it's not difficult to learn; the difficulty is in the amount of effort required to achieve a higher level. So I refute the idea that there is such a thing as a hard style and a competition style, but that's the impression that's given out. The hard style was something that was created by Pavel and the RKC, who borrowed the language from martial arts. In martial arts there is a division between what they call hard style and soft style, so we can use the same analogy to answer your question. The hard style is differentiated in the way that the focus is on the tendency for there to be a lot of rigidity, a great amount of effort in the movements. Traditionally, hard style in the martial arts, such as hard style karate, the movements are very rigid and tense; that's not the same in all instances, there are very fluid stylists as well, but by classification hard style has a general characteristic of relying heavily on maximal force production. In martial arts what is called the soft styles are those which tend to be more fluid, inner based, and focused more on the redirection of forces rather than overpowering someone. The terminology would be to use the attackers force against them. So, using that comparison we can say that hard style kettlebell lifting strives to maximise the force in every rep, and what people refer to as the competition style, the idea is to minimise the force in every rep simply because the goal is maximal reps. And if you're going for endurance the more tension you carry in your body the more fatigue you're going to illicit and you're not going to be able to last as long. So that's the definition of terms, but in reality, the way we really differentiate is by skill level and not by style. If you get the best ten lifters in the world

you're going to see ten slightly different body styles, every move is not going to be the same, even though they all have an extremely high of ability. So the question really is what manner of movement do I want to use that is going to give me the greatest effects and results? With kettlebells we're talking about fitness and volume, what method will enable me to have the greatest volume and therefore the greatest conditioning effect?

CO Right, so in terms of people who are training purely for fat loss, not for competition, would you say that the more fluid method of lifting would still be most effective?

SC I think that the answer to that is similar to having two cars at a race track, a Ferrari and a Toyota, which one's going to win? The answer is quite obvious. The method that is going to illicit the greatest fat loss and the greatest level of conditioning is that which is going to allow the greatest volume. So, what is going to allow the greatest volume is the method that is going to enable you to go for the longest, do the most reps, and work for the longest period of time. That is going to be, using the earlier terminology, the competition style. I don't try to reinvent the wheel so instead of me trying to sell my approach, I look at the best lifters in the world and see what their approach is and how they get to these high levels, and anyone that pursues sport at a high level is going to realise very quickly that if you're using rigidity in your movement you're going to fatigue very quickly and you're not going to get very good results. To use a martial arts analogy, just as you don't want to bring a knife to a gun fight, you don't use 100lbs of force when 10lbs of force will do the job.

CO That makes a lot of sense. Another thing that I know there is a lot of debate about is squat depth and what is safe. In the strength and conditioning world the opinion tends to be that changing the position of the lumbar spine during the squat, particularly under load, isn't a good thing in terms of the shearing forces it places on the vertebrae, whereas during the IKFF course we worked a number of squat variations through full range of motion and into what one would call a deep squat. What are your thoughts on that?

SC I would say that to be fair it wouldn't just be the strength and conditioning community that would advocate that, it would also be the medical community as well, but you have to look at the physics and you have to look at the stressors on the spine, the mechanics. I think the real concern is going to be that when the spine is under load and the curvature changes at the bottom, the lumbar is going to tend to curve under, and that curvature, especially when you're under a fair amount of load, is going to put shearing forces on the lumbar spine. So there's a couple of components here. The first is where the weight is situated. There's a huge difference between if someone's just using their bodyweight versus where say they have a maximal load on a barbell on their shoulders. The other point is where the load is actually placed. If the load is in front of you, as in the front squat, it's going to be very different to if it's behind you, say in a barbell back squat. Then there is the range of motion and the overall flexibility of the lifter. A well trained lifter can do a full range of motion squat with a heavy load and not injure the spine because they have the flexibility in the hips to create space and allow the forces to dissipate. A very stiff person has no business putting a heavy weight on their back and squatting it full range of motion. With kettlebells we typically will do the overhead squat or the front squat, not on the back, so it's usually not a super heavy load anyway. So with the weight in front of you you have an offset counter of balance, a mass in front of you, so that serves as a counter weight and enables you to sit back further and deeper. So to summarise this on the

position of the spine, we have what's appropriate for athletic performance and dealing with massive amounts of resistance, and then we have what we need for general daily function. If we look at the body and natural function there's a definite need, from the time of ancestry, where the ability to go to a full squat was really crucial. For example, for someone who's going to work in the fields they don't have chairs and in any non-industrialised nation you'll see workers moving into the full squat even into their old age, and if you look at children they'll naturally do a full squat. And if anyone's been to Asia, you have to move into a full squat to go to the bathroom even, so the ability to be able to do a full squat with the bodyweight is really a fundamental movement.

CO Cool, use it or lose it as they say. Steve you mentioned earlier about Qigong and this was something you took us through after the first day of the course. Can you tell me a bit more about it and why you consider it to be so important as part of training?

SC Yes. Qigong, if we try to define the terms, can be difficult as Chinese language uses pictograph, whereas we use words, so we're trying to change a picture into a word which isn't exactly possible, so we can only estimate what the meaning would be. The only way to really describe the meaning is through a picture, but Qi will quite often be translated as breath, or energy, and neither of those are exact. A more precise explanation of Qi would be that there is an intrinsic force that exists that is most closely associated with the breath. Gong is a term referring to any ability or any skill, so we would say that Qigong is a system of breathing skill or energy mastery, and there is a very rich tradition behind it. The most famous method of Qigong internationally is Tai Chi, which has its origin as a martial art but is also a system of Qigong. Some of the key characteristics of Qigong are that it combines deep breathing with very relaxed posture, and there's a mindfulness, a deep meditative presence in all of the movements. So another way of saying Qigong is that it's a form of moving meditation.

Why it is important after training, not that it needs to be done immediately after a hard training session, but it's really important in general for everyone because we have our physical body, and then we have what you could call your energetic body. This is not to sound mystical or metaphysical but we have forces within our body that are not the flesh or the bone; in the west the Russians talk about the term bioelectricity and maybe that might be closely associated to what the Chinese call Qi. It's this idea that energy radiates in, through, and around our body and all life forms. So through exercise and fitness we can condition our muscles and we can train our nervous system, and we can make our bones more dense through resistance training, but through just physical exercise alone we cannot actually train the energy. So Qigong is a method to train the quality of our energy and not just our physical body. In Chinese they talk about yin and yang to symbolise balance and so in life we have to have balance between hard and soft, so the idea for health and well being and overall longevity is that we need to balance the vigorous nature of physical training with the recuperative and rejuvenate aspect of the deep breathing and Qigong meditative movements. The last point I'd like to make about this has to do with biology and the fact that we all age, and the reason why I include Qigong with my system of training and even with the kettlebells is that any exercise system that is based purely on physicality is inherently incomplete. This is because of the fact that we can't sustain the hardcore aggressiveness indefinitely, we reach a physical peak, and every person will get to a time where the body ages to the point where they're no longer going to be as fast, or be able to jump as high, and if your whole system is based on running faster, jumping higher, hitting harder, lifting heavier, lifting more, you can certainly do it when you're 20 and 30 but

maybe not when your 40, or maybe when you're 40 but not when you're 60, 70, 80. That's not to say you can't do the physical training but you have to balance it, so Qigong is something that anyone can do throughout their whole life, you can't overtrain with it and you can't do hard physical training all the time, so we need Qigong to really restore the body and it's something we can use even into our elderly years.

CO Ok cool. During the certification you gave a really thought provoking reference to the tortoise and the hare in relation to achieving success; can you just recap on that story briefly for the benefit of our readers?

SC Yes absolutely. I believe that for everything that I teach to be useful it has to be useful in our lives and not just in a given activity. Certainly we can have principles and techniques that are useful for certain activities, however my way of teaching and communicating is to really make the fitness component as something that enhances the overall being, so that would be the wholeness of the individual and not simply their physical body. So there's character development aspects to the training and when we're talking about success, we're interested in success in the kettlebell lifts but also interested in the ability to apply those principles to other facets of our life and to have success in our whole life as much as possible. So when we look at the tortoise and the hare, and the fable there, it's very instructive in terms of use of energy, and use of our thoughts, and the way in which we conduct ourselves and our personal characteristics. When we look at the story, with which people are familiar, the hare races off at the start and he's way ahead, and he's so far ahead that he gets complacent and tires out and gets lazy, and he kind of figures that 'there's no way the slow tortoise is going to beat me, I'm the man, I'm the fast athlete here.' And so he just coasts. Meanwhile the tortoise is quite slow but it's quite persevering as well, and the tortoise is just continuing and going and going and it doesn't stop, and it's not going at a fast rate but it keeps going and never gives up and we know the ending of the story; the tortoise is able to beat the hare because it's able to keep going and doesn't give up, so when we look at this from a kettlebell perspective, we're not looking at who can pick up the heaviest kettlebell one time, there's a sport that's designed for that that's called power lifting, or Olympic lifting, so if you want to demonstrate your power with the resistance then you do a deadlift or a bench press or a squat and you show who's the strongest guy for one rep. But that's not what kettlebells came from, and it's not its purpose, and frankly even the biggest kettlebells are not heavy enough for super heavy athletes or super advanced strength athletes. So if someone's goal is to develop maximal strength there's a point where they're not going to use a kettlebell to train with, they'll use other tools more suitable to the job, such as a barbell. So that's one point. But since we're really going for fitness and work capacity it's not the heaviest kettlebell you can lift once, it's how many times you can lift it, and how long you can work for. So to be impressive with a kettlebell it's not just can you do it once, it's how long you can last. So the moral of the story is finish what you start. We have to learn self control, patience and discipline, because even a highly trained athlete will start getting tired and their instinct is to want to speed up and just get it over with because it starts hurting and they want to sprint through and get as many reps as they can, but ultimately if you have to stop because you blew your wad or you couldn't continue because you used it up, it's like money. If you spend all your pay check on Monday then you don't get to eat on Friday. You have to make it last, and that's what the tortoise and hare is really about; learn to be more like the tortoise, then once you know how to be a tortoise then you can start moving faster.

CO Great. I think it's fair to say that you are one of the world's most highly regarded and inspiring trainers. What do you mostly attribute your personal success to?

SC That's a really good question. There's a couple of key things. Firstly there's no replacement for going very in-depth into the subject matter; we can't fake expertise and there's definitely a prevalent marketing approach, particularly on the internet, to do with fitness, where people market themselves as experts, where in reality just because someone says they're an expert and promotes themselves as an expert doesn't actually give them expertise, so the first thing in success in anything is that we have to have not only familiarity but we have to have studied deeply the subject matter at hand. As a general philosophical thing, success has certain universal attributes and I believe, from what I've seen and experienced, if you study successful people who are willing to share their road to success, their secrets if you will, you'll see many parallels and universal congruents among them, regardless of their field of expertise. So for me, fundamentally it's an internal component, the expertise comes from the study and the knowledge base, the practical understanding, and part of becoming an expert is becoming a teacher. When I became a teacher it was initially for selfish reasons because I wanted to become a better student. And by teaching you get asked questions so you really have to study deeper. The techniques and the training and the knowledge, that's what I'd call the external or the outer element of success. The internal component has everything to do with our mindset and our approach. One thing I like to say is attitude is altitude, and that is really the truth with success. Success is an attitude, an acceptance of being willing to be successful and to live our dreams and fulfil our purpose, and that begins with clarity. We have to know exactly what we want to achieve before we have any chance of achieving it. There are many people that are sort of wandering, talking about what they want and look to others and say this person's lucky or that person's lucky because they have that wealth or that girl or they have that life, and they're successful and I'm not, and they don't see the inner workings of that, they just see the trappings of it. But really the first step is for an individual to really look inside themselves and ask themselves certain questions, and that's what I call clarity. You have to have a clear idea of a) what you want to do and accomplish, it doesn't matter how big or small; it just matters how meaningful it is. It could be something as simple as someone wanting a healthy life surrounded by friends and loved ones, which is a tremendous success in its own right, then it can be all the way to the level of someone who wants to be the president of America or wants to be the best in the world at something. There's all different manifestations of what it means to be successful, but in my experience it begins with clarity. I believe another important component is the idea of creativity. We're all creative and life is creative, a creation. And within every creation there is a creative process. If you take the most beautiful sculpture, before it was a sculpture it was just a block of wood, someone has to have the idea to turn that blank block into a beautiful chair or table, or a blank canvas into a beautiful painting. So success is the fruit, but the labour is what bears the fruit, the internal work and identifying what you really are and what you want to do. As the saying goes, the only thing to fear is fear itself. When we think of success we become successful. It begins within. We always hear about competition but this is a mindset we need to get out of. There is of course an element of competition in business and in sport; however to me competition is really something we have with ourselves, we are competing with what we are now because we want to become better. People focus so much on what the guy down the street or some other trainer or colleague is doing that they're focusing their energy on that versus keeping it on an internal 'what can I do right now?' All

we can control is ourselves, that's the only tangible thing that we can really keep control of, and that's where success really begins, the way we use our mind. What people actually refer to as success is the results of success, but success itself has nothing to do with results, it has everything to do with the driving force which is behind the results, which is the mindset.

CO That is very true. Thanks Steve. Can you just finish off by telling everyone how they can find out more about the IKFF and upcoming courses?

SC Absolutely. Well first of all there is the <http://www.ikff.net> website, which is our primary website and gives all the information about the courses. Also my other website is <http://www.fullkontakt.com>. In addition we have quite a large group on Facebook so people are welcome to join that and we post information there, and we also have a really growing network of really high calibre physical teachers in every continent now, with the exception of Antarctica, for the moment! Here in the UK I suggest people go to your website at <http://www.charlotteord.com> as well to find information about kettlebells and the IKFF, and lastly people are welcome to contact me directly at stevecotter@ikff.net, I'm always able and willing to answer questions.

CO Perfect. Steve thank you very much for taking part in this interview and I wish you and the IKFF all the best for the future.

SC You're welcome!