



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success for the Athletic-Minded Man Podcast
Action Plan Episode #511
Dean King

Most men don't need more comfort; they need a good punch in the gut from reality.

In this "Success for the Athletic-Minded Man" episode, I sit down with Dean King, award-winning author of "Skeletons on the Zahara," "Guardians of the Valley," and a dozen other nonfiction thrillers.

But these aren't just stories— Dean lives them.

He's survived camel-back expeditions across the Sahara, dodged bullets in West Virginia while researching the Hatfields and McCoys, and walked the Portuguese Camino with his daughter, all in pursuit of truth, purpose, and a damn good story.

This one is for the man stuck in his business, career, or routine— searching for clarity, momentum, or maybe just his edge. We talk about the value of discomfort, why letting go of control is often the key to growth, and how to find purpose through adversity.

If you've ever felt like you're going through the motions, this episode will remind you what it means to *feel alive* again.

You'll walk away with lessons on mindset, resilience, and how to architect small (or massive) adventures that pull you out of the fog and back into a life of clarity, confidence, and meaning.

Ready to get uncomfortable? Good. That's where the growth happens. Tune in now!

Top Quotes From This Episode

"It's better to try and fail than not to try."

"You're not going to do it all alone. Most of these things aren't being done for the first time. There are people who have experience, and people who want to help you."

"Life is in some ways a continuing series of failures."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **What It Takes to Write Like Dean King (3:54):** Dean isn't just a bestselling author, he's a man who literally puts himself into the stories. From crossing the Sahara on camelback to walking into gunfire in West Virginia, Dean explains how discomfort, danger, and deep immersion bring truth to his writing— and why doing hard things matters for all of us.
- **The Power of Making Legends Human (7:22):** Dean explains how he brings historical figures like Devil Anse Hatfield and Captain Riley to life so readers can see themselves in these heroes, and be inspired to act courageously in their own lives.
- **Why Research Means Leaving the Library (9:24):** Dean reveals how he transitioned from studying in the NYU library to trekking across deserts, interviewing descendants, and embracing unpredictable adventures— all to tell the truth better.
- **You Can't Control the Desert or Life (12:43):** From corrupt military officials to landmines to camel injuries, Dean's Sahara journey was a logistical and emotional mess. His biggest lesson? Control what you can, surrender what you can't, and trust your preparation.
- **Grace Under Pressure (18:17):** Dean explains how staying grounded during uncertainty helps you see new paths and opportunities. Leadership, he says, comes from how you show up when the plan falls apart.
- **Why Dean Chose the Hard Path (21:24):** Dean talks about the "itch" that led him to pursue adventure-based storytelling instead of a safe career. His reflection helps any man ask: What's the fire inside me that I've ignored for too long?
- **The Problem With Modern Comfort (25:36):** Dean unpacks how physical suffering, stripped-down simplicity, and shared hardship build character, deepen relationships, and reset what really matters.
- **Architecting Discomfort into Your Life (30:25):** Dean discusses how to "design in" adversity— whether through fitness, fatherhood, or weekend adventures. This is your wake-up call to reclaim your hunger, your edge, and your identity as a man who does hard things on purpose.
- **What To Do If You Feel Stuck (31:28):** Feeling lost in a job, business, or life you didn't consciously choose? Dean shares a powerful mindset shift: growth starts with letting go, making the call, and being okay with not having all the answers. Progress begins where control ends.
- **Reclaiming Your Sense of Adventure (35:21):** Dean gives practical advice for the man who's lost touch with adventure— and why you need to get it back now.

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

Dean King books

"Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship that Saved Yosemite"

"Skeletons on the Zahara: A True Story of Survival"

[Watch] "Gold & Greed: The Hunt for Fenn's Treasure"

Patrick O'Brian Books:

"Master and Commander"

"The Far Side Of The World"

[Watch] "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World"

"Sufferings in Africa" by James Riley

"The Comfort Crisis: Embrace Discomfort To Reclaim Your Wild, Happy, Healthy Self" by Michael Easter

"Commonwealth" by Ann Patchett

Other Episodes Referenced

#275 The Underground Movement That's Transforming Men Across America: F3 Founder Dave "Dredd" Redding

#340 Joe De Sena on Resilience for Families and the Spartan Lifestyle

Guest Website and Social

Dean King

[Website](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

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