

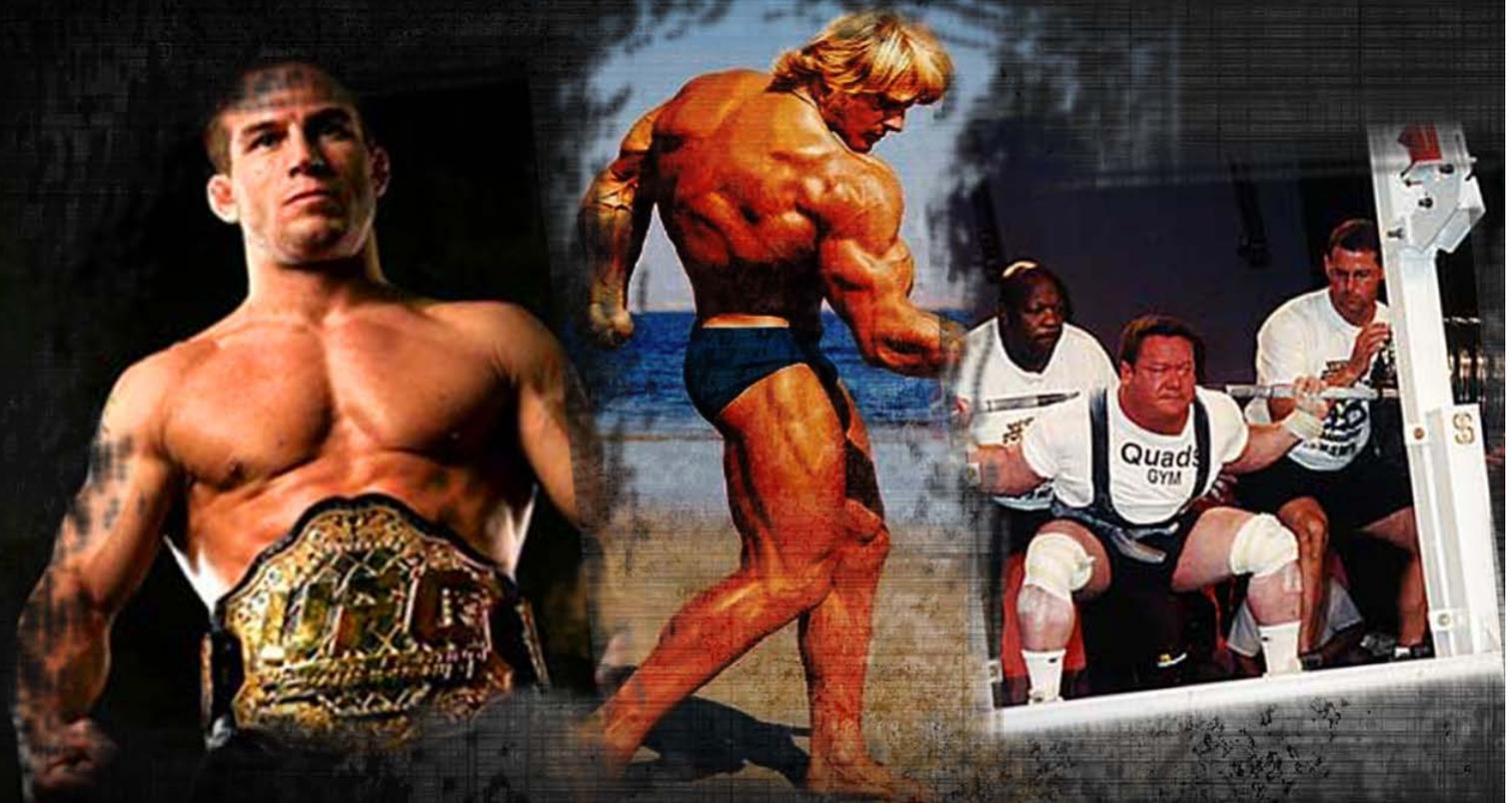
 **CRITICAL BENCH**.com presents...

# CONVERSATIONS

WITH

**ELITE IRON WARRIORS**

**Learn From The World's  
BEST BODYBUILDERS,  
POWERLIFTERS & FIGHTERS!**



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# POWERLIFTER RYAN CELLI

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com - November 2008*



Photo by SAS Digital Memories

*Ryan Celli's reputation precedes him. He's an established raw and equipped lifter. Recently he broke the USPF 220 pound class bench record with a 639 press. He also won best lifter in last year's Raw Unity Meet. Ryan has his own training facility called [Celli's Fitness](#).*

*Here at Critical Bench we try to help gyms and lifters out by sponsoring meets when we can. This time it's our turn to thank the Cellis, John Casciato and the entire Celli's Fitness team for lending us a helping hand. You see we've been participating in breast cancer fund raiser and Ryan's gym was our major sponsor, contributing close to a grand to help the cause.*

*We're excited to get started with the interview. Meet super bencher Ryan Celli!*

**Critical Bench: Ryan, congratulations on breaking bench press legend Chris Confessore's bench record in the USPF. Thanks for the interview opportunity. Introduce yourself to the readers.**

Ryan Celli: I'm 34 year old gym owner and personal trainer. I live in Bridgeville, PA. I've been married for 9 years to my wife, Dana. We have a 4 year old son, Noah. I love to compete and try to do at least one full power meet per year. In June of 2007, Dana and I opened Celli's Fitness Center in the city of Pittsburgh. The gym is in Lawrenceville and is steadily growing with talented lifters; you can see many pictures of them at [www.cellisfitness.com](http://www.cellisfitness.com).

**Critical Bench: Life sounds good. Ryan you won best lifter at the [2008 Raw Unity Meet](#) in both full power and bench only! How would you describe your winning experience at the RUM?**

Winning the [Raw Unity Meet](#) was awesome. Eric Talmant and his wife Denise couldn't have done a better job. I've been competing for 19 years and have to say it was one of the best run most organized meets I've ever competed in.



What made the meet exceptional for me was the fact that I was able to win the full power meet as well as the bench only. I originally wanted to enter the bench only to get a chance to compete against some of the best 198 raw bench pressers. Then I had the idea of competing in both. I called Eric and asked him if it would be possible to enter the bench only and full meet, he said yes. So that is what I did and ended up winning best lifter in both. I can't wait till next year, hopefully even more competitors show.

**Critical Bench: We have to agree the Raw Unity Meet was a huge success. You just went down in history as the first winner! Ryan, you just set an American record in the 220 class, benching 639. Tell us about that. What was it like setting the record and what you did to celebrate after?**

Well, Scott Rowe broke Chris Confessore's 18 year old record of 618 on June 29th at USPF Nationals, I benched 622.7 at the same meet at 198 as a full meet lifter. I knew I could bench more at a higher weight class and not having to squat first. When I saw the listing for the New Martinville USPF meet I knew that was my chance. In the meantime, Aug 2nd Ryan Girard set the mark even higher with a 633. I still knew I could do more than that. I weighted in at 211 the morning of the meet, opened with 606 and went right for the record with a 639.2. I still had my third attempt and thought I'd try to up it even more with a 644, it didn't go! It was exciting, as that was not only a new American record, but a personal best for me, which is even more important.

**Critical Bench: Strategic move going for the record on your 2nd attempt. Ryan, how does it feel to be a world record holder right now?**

I'm lovin it and enjoying every minute because I know there are people right on my tail. Records don't always last 18-years anymore.

**Critical Bench: How long have you been powerlifting? Were you always very strong?**

I started powerlifting when I was 15 years old. I entered my first bench meet in September of 1989. I benched 175 raw in the 114 class and won 1st place. I only weighted 110 at 5' 6". I've been hooked ever since.

**Critical Bench: Wow, a lot has changed since you were that 15 year old kid! How did you become interested in powerlifting?**

My stepfather Jack was into lifting and had some equipment set up in our garage. I remember him having Powerlifting USA's laying around that I would always read. He always wanted me to try lifting weights. When I finally gave in, he was amazed at my bench press strength and trained me for my first bench meet.



Photo by SAS Digital Memories

**Critical Bench: Well, here you are today in Powerlifting USA telling the world about the world record you have just achieved! Amazing! What is your usual weight class?**

I usually weigh around 205-210 and compete at 198. I've competed in every weight class from 114 to 220 and have totaled elite in the 148,165,181,198.

**Critical Bench: Being successful in both equipped and non equipped lifting, do you prefer to lift with gear or raw?**

I train and compete both equipped and non-equipped. I love and respect both. I believe equipped is healthier and easier on your joints.

**Critical Bench: How do you see the future of powerlifting changing?**

I see powerlifting losing all credibility with the poor judging and multiply gear and most importantly all the new organizations popping up every day along with all the divisions available.

I also see it reaching its all time low, and rebounding back into a legitimate raw and single ply sport, maybe even a legit multi-ply with strict rules of performance. The problem is, the general public just doesn't understand the gear. They automatically think it's cheating. So even though I'm all for wearing gear, I'm afraid the sport won't ever make it with us using it exclusively. Have you ever tried to explain to someone outside the sport what a bench shirt is?

**Critical Bench: Something to think about. You are more than just a bench press anomaly freak of nature, you are also good at other lifts. What are your best lifts?**

Some of my best lifts are a 530 raw bench, 700 raw deadlift, a 2000 single ply USPF total, and a 1756 raw total. I recently benched 622.7 in the 198's single ply, which was a WPF World record and USPF American record.

**Critical Bench: What are your current goals? What are your long term goals?**

My current RAW goals at 198 are to bench press 550 and total 1800. I recently just reached another goal I had. I wanted to total 2000 in single ply at 198 and was able to do so this year at the USPF Nationals June 29th 2008. Long term goals are to stay healthy and continue to compete.

**Critical Bench: What is your proudest moment in powerlifting?**

Winning both the Best lifter and Best bencher at the [Raw Unity Meet](#) and taking home \$900, and then 3 weeks later winning the USPF American Cup Best lifter and taking home \$1000 and a new American bench record of 584. This record meant a lot to me as it has not been broken for 20 years; In June I was able to bump this record up to 622.7.

**Critical Bench: That is incredible! Describe your training.**

I train 3 days a week. Monday - squat, Wednesday - bench, and Friday - deadlift.

Simple! I don't really follow any set training regime other than the set training days. I train by feel, and always try to go heavy. If I feel beat up I may do some speed work.

I use kettlebells, frequently and believe they have helped my strength, flexibility and upper back size.

**Critical Bench: Who do you train with?**

I train alone most of the time. When training for a competition I always have support from gym members. We always come together to help one another when someone is getting ready for a competition.

**Critical Bench: Do you have any advice for beginners?**

Learn the lifts, the form and technique, the weight will come. Eat, sleep, rest and only train 3 days a week. Talk to all the lifters you can and learn from them. Compete as much as possible. Most beginners are reluctant to start competing, but I feel you need to regardless of your strength in order to learn and improve. There are a growing number of professional powerlifters available on Wannabebig.com.

**Critical Bench: Out of the squat, bench and deadlift, what is your favorite lift?**

I love all three lifts.

**Critical Bench: What is your least favorite lift?**

I hate good mornings for some reason.

**Critical Bench: What are some important dos and don'ts?**

Get plenty of rest and listen to your body. When you feel beat up and need a break, take one!

**Critical Bench: How do you mentally prepare for a contest?**

Mentally I try to be positive. I use a lot of visualization. I see myself doing everything from chalking up, to walking up to the bar and executing the lift in the most controlled explosive manner imaginable. I see the three white lights and hear the crowd go wild.

**Critical Bench: What goes through your mind during and after completing a huge lift?**

I stay calm and try to channel my energy into the lift. After the completion of a lift I try and remember exactly how it felt so I can duplicate it next time.

**Critical Bench: What do you enjoy doing away from powerlifting?**

I'd say powerlifting is pretty much my life, but other than that I enjoy spending time with my wife and son, riding my motorcycle, fishing, eating out, going to see a good movie, and hanging out with friends and family.

**Critical Bench: Do you take any supplements?**

I'm honored to be sponsored by At Large Nutrition and have been using mostly their products. I use their Opticen, Nitrean, Results, ETS, [creatine monohydrate](#), [fish oil](#), and [multivitamin](#). I also use [flax oil](#), [garlic](#), and a green drink.



Photo by SAS Digital Memories

**Critical Bench: Do you have any favorite quotes or sayings that have helped you become as successful as you are today?**

You can do anything you put your mind to.

**Critical Bench: Ryan, you are living proof of that! You have set the record and we are looking forward to seeing what you have in store next. It has been an honor talking to you today. In closing is there anyone who you would like to thank?**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my wife Dana, for believing in me and always being there and supporting me no matter what I decide to do.

I'd like to thank Critical Bench for the opportunity to do this interview.

I'd like to thank my sponsors, Alan Thomas from [APT Pro Gear](#), Chris Mason from At Large Nutrition, Pete Alaniz from Titan Support Systems, Ken Anderson from Anderson Powerlifting, and Ty and James from Supplement Central.

I'd like to thank everyone from [Celli's Fitness](#) for always being there for me when I need them, Fei Lung for the incredible photos he takes for the Celli's web site, and Natty Freed for taking care of the Celli's Fitness website. I'd also like to thank my massage therapist Amie Marx. I can't leave out John Casciato, he's always there for me whenever I need anything. I rely on him for his valuable training advice, motivation and keen eye for technical errors. My training sessions and competitions always go better when I have him with me. Thanks everyone!

# BODYBUILDING LEGEND DAVE DRAPER

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – July 2003*

## **Q-1) CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR ON SEASON TRAINING DIET AND OFF SEASON TRAINING AND DIET?**

A) My diet is pretty much the same year-round, high protein, low carb and medium good fats. Remember, I'm 61 years old and though I train harder and more effectively in many ways than I did during my developing and competitive days, my needs are different, my capabilities and possibilities limited. I no longer have an on- and off-season. It is one season and mostly on.

I do, however, hold extra bodyweight by choice as part of my smart training scheme. This is done to assure my body of an anabolic environment and allow me to train harder and heavier. (I'm no striking powerhouse, of course; time and injury redefine your training.) Carrying an extra 5 or 10 pounds, I'm more resistant to injury, less restricted in menu and less critical of a finished-physique look. The latter is a stress and stumbling block in itself, as if hoisting the iron wasn't enough.



The serviceable bodyfat is personally acceptable. I feel tight and I can button my pants.

Something of interest: My diet is the same now as it was when I was training hard to gain mass and power in the '60s and '70s. I just ate more, lots more. No fast or junk foods, though ice cream reached my plate and eventually my obliques during those formative years. That's gone and the smorgasbord eating is gone. Lots of beef, fish, chicken and dairy, plus heaps of salads and steamed cruciferous vegetables constitute my menu now as then. I depend more and more on a good protein powder (love my Bomber Blend) for important protein feedings throughout the day (breakfast, pre- and post-workout meals and pre-bedtime feeding) and a super vitamin and mineral. I also take creatine and EFAs these past years.

Pre-contest dieting for me consisted mostly of eating less in general, dumping the dairy the last weeks as I gauged hardness and cut the carbs to a minimum. There are individual tricks to dial in muscularity and fullness the last weeks and days, but you get the idea.

Today we have an extreme sport with extreme measures about which I know nothing.

**Q-2) WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR A YOUNGER LIFTER WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE A BODYBUILDING CHAMPION?**

A) Think twice about the champion part and fall in love with the lifting of iron and steel. The goal can get in your way causing you to trip over your feet before you learn how to squat. Train hard, eat right, find joy in the disciplines and practice them consistently. Grow up and into the sport day by day and, thus, avoid setting yourself up for disappointment, expecting too much, being ever critical and trying to satisfy an image.

The real deal is in the training, the struggle, the perseverance, the self control and the determination. The champion will rise up from these qualities.

Goals are important to me. I prefer direction and am most productive when they are clear before me. But the top floor is too far away and I get dizzy looking up. Step by step, one floor at a time with guts and persistence. That's the certain way to the top.

You, dear reader, have chosen a fantastic sport to build your life around. It requires hard work, thank God, and only basic knowledge as your education. The rest comes from you, your diligent practice, your sacrifice, your strong will, self-awareness, trust and patience. You see there are no shortcuts, no secrets. It's you, the weights, the awesome gravity and the clang of metal, deep breathing and sweat and pain and joy.



Encouragement from each other is priceless, like oxygen to a drowning mate.

Too much information and seeking it endlessly is a dead end. We're all different with different needs. Who are you? Train long enough and you'll find out. It's the basics, man, in working out and eating right.

Unless, of course, you choose pharmaceuticals to support your cause.

**Q-3) WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BODYBUILDING MOMENT?**

A) I won Mr. America in 1965 and Mr. Universe in 1966. Things in bodybuilding were moving fast in those days and the sport was taking its first steps toward the moon. Onstage and winning those titles with the competing champions was nothing short of sensational. The contests were held in the Opera House of the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the audience was brand new, standing room only. They didn't know what to expect, they had no previous exposure to the likes of the new champions and they were completely uninhibited. You'd have to have been there. The roar of the crowd was almost frightening. Never had I expected so much honest emotion to erupt from a bunch of happy-go-lucky bodybuilding fans. The exuberant human sounds came in huge waves and we felt literally lifted up and shifted. The staging shook, the

curtains quivered and the NY union workers grabbed their gear and readied their post as if soldiers under siege.

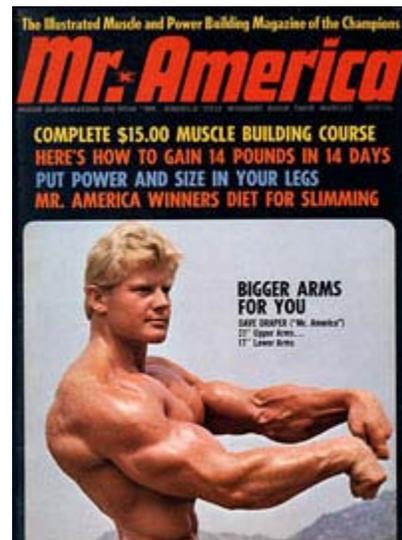
What a night. The crowds are great now, but they've been there-done that, if you know what I mean. Nothing like spontaneity.

#### **Q-4) HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF BODYBUILDING?**

A) Not through tired eyes, though they may bear a slight squint. I love it more than ever, though I have always thought of it as weight lifting and musclebuilding. Tell you the truth, I'm not crazy about the bodybuilding thing or the fitness thing. Too dopey, imitated and false. I like the iron, the intensity, pushing and pulling and making muscles. Yeah, like that's not dopey.

Anyhow, I wish more people would see the picture and get in shape, but that's not happening in the next 24 hours. About bodybuilding, I see it traveling the same road for awhile. There are actually several roads, the highways and the byways. The highways serve the fast-paced sub-culture of extreme bodybuilders who will continue to seek the extremes and thrill the audience of crazies and rads. Can't hold them down, though the big market might not support them forever and they might slowly diminish in popularity. The core will become smaller and tighter with greater critical mass.

The byways are bumper to bumper with standard bodybuilders and muscle makers, some who are on a little stuff, some into natural competition, some who just love being strong and in good shape and striving and some who loved it when they were a kid and now that they're 40, 50 and 60, want it again: good health and muscles and might and long-life and sweet training. The latter fringe is growing.



#### **Q-5) WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST MISTAKES YOU SEE BEGINNERS MAKING?**

Bodybuilding, weightlifting and powerlifting have many components and the new participants come in all shapes and sizes. The mistakes made are numerous and various. Off the top of my head let me list the top six mistakes in the beginner's section: 1- Jumping into training without a clue. This worked for me and pre-historic man, but some basic knowledge picked up from an honest-to-goodness coach, be he a friend or professional, is not a bad idea. Get the basics down and start pounding away, learning as you go with focus and self-awareness. Once you learn the basics in exercise, muscle action and muscle grouping, sets and reps, your mistakes will become your guide.

2- Not working legs, like they were totally disconnected from their shoulders and arms. Another way of saying this is; they don't do squats. Gasp. The single most important builder of the body (next to the bench press, I guess one might say, if they were locked in a gym with a bunch of bench press-crazed physical culturists). Get with it.

3- Not addressing the training component of sound nutrition and right eating. Lots of protein, breakfast, frequent feedings, no junk food. things like that... vitamins and minerals, lots of water. You are what you eat.

4- Expecting and looking for too much, too soon and submission to disappointment. Not giving the training a chance, the real test and, thus, not applying or developing discipline, patience and perseverance. or muscle and might.

5- Doing bench presses that are too heavy, too soon and ferociously wrong in form. You know, the severely arched back, the big bounce, the right goes up followed sometime later by the left. Very personal. Your shoulders hate you for the rest of your life. Train hard, be wise, take care of your joints, tendons and muscles.

6- Seeking information like it was gold -- the real answer, the hidden truth, the secret, the faster way, the better way, the pro's way. Along with that is believing in the magazines and studying their advertisements. Research more, train less, learn less, go nowhere, go home. It's in you, it's in the iron, it's in the work, hard consistent work. That's also where the joy is stashed, where fulfillment overflows and where boys become men and girls become stronger and leaner girls. Hi cutie.

#### **Q-6) HOW IMPORTANT IS THE QUESTION, "HOW MUCH DO YOU BENCH PRESS," TO A BODYBUILDER?**

A) Well, the best I did as a bodybuilder was 440 at 6AM in the dungeon on a poorly made bench of splintered 2x4s and protruding 10-penny nails bentover to prevent tripping, lacerations or punctures. I was without a spot; I was alone as usual and the bar was bent like a buffalo bar. Great for squatting. I did not often pursue one-rep maxes as I couldn't handle the possibility of failure. Security is not a bodybuilder's strong point. I could have done more if I worked at it.

The question is important. The greatest lure to the newbie (and the guy who should know better) who walks across the gym floor is the mound of iron held invitingly, threateningly, precariously over the flat bench. It stares at you and you stare back. The challenge is unspoken, unavoidable. inevitable. It's the law.

The bench press is considered the true measure of one's weight lifting prowess; the definer, one's credentials, the passport and the demanding, yet affectionate daddy of all exercises.

How much can you bench press, big question mark, is the writ of passage.

The problem is the price for pushing the bench is high. It's those shoulders, man. Dumbbell inclines are a great and safe substitute and big chest and shoulder builder.

#### **Q-7) IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO IRONMAN READERS?**

Absolutely, if ya'll have time to listen. Please sign up for my free weekly newsletter at [davedraper.com](http://davedraper.com) and we can communicate regularly. The facts are limited, but there's no end to the learning.

Go with God, The Bomber, Dave Draper

# HYBRID ATHLETE MARI ASP

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – January 2009*

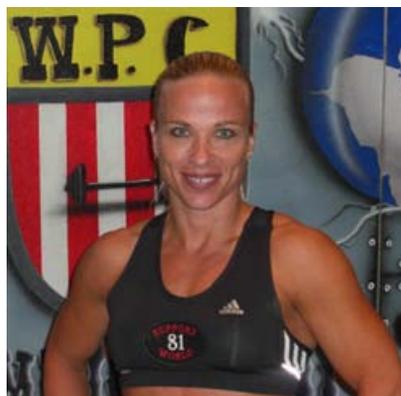
## Mari Asp aka Fit Mari - Breaking Hearts & Records



### Gymnast Gone Powerlifter To Figure Competitor Back to Powerlifting!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Critical Bench is here with fitness and strength house hold name athlete, Fit Mari AKA Mari Asp. Mari Asp, welcome back to Critical Bench! A lot has happened to you since we last interviewed you. Before we discuss your intense story, introduce yourself to us.

I am Mari Asp, born June 8, 1975 to Paal and Jorunn Asp in Lillestroem Norway. At a young age, I began training gymnastics and ended up traveling the world competing internationally. My parents were supportive of my gymnastics and as a result, I became National champion by the age of thirteen.



Once my ability to be competitive in gymnastics was gone, it was suggested I try "powerlifting". Within a short time, I became the Norwegian Powerlifting champion.

After a few years as a powerlifter, I decided to try Fitness when Lena Johannesen inspired me. Although I worked hard getting in shape for a Fitness competition, it takes a lot of discipline, but it didn't give me the challenge I wanted. I am not into the "all pretty" look. I like it when the competition day is the biggest challenge, not just the preparations. I went back to powerlifting. I found that the strength I already had from gymnastics was just waiting to be used more.

In June 2002 I moved to Los Angeles, California.

I have since set numerous California and American Bench-Press records. I have worked out with many of the biggest names in bodybuilding, powerlifting and fitness industry. Found friendship in people driven by the same types of things. I got experience in that world with some really driven people like Odd Haugen, Ed Coan, Charles Glass, Mike O'hearn, [Lou Ferrigno](#) and Scot Mendelson..... For a little girl from Norway, this was a big deal to me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Wow, you do have a very impressive background! For those who have heard of Mari Asp, as you can see from this [former Critical Bench interview](#) she has achieved a lot! In August 2006 you tore your triceps and labrum in your shoulder. Is that true?**

Yes it is.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What happened? Tell us about the experience and what it was like for you mentally.**

In August of 2006 I did the USAPL California State Championship. I did not get my opener. During my 2nd lift, something happened in my shoulder and arm. I heard a "snap", and felt pain. I still had one more lift left.



I "put" the pain to the side. Went in, and got up 336lbs, and white lamps.

The pain was not as bad while I had the bench shirt on, but when I took it off the pain came on as if a truck hit me. I thought I just stretched something, so I had no rush getting to doctor.

A few weeks went by, but I was still not getting better. I was "forced" to go get an MRI. The MRI showed that I had a little more serious injury than I thought. I had to get it fixed, if not; there is absolutely no chance for me to lift again!

The long road started. My whole life using my body is what I been doing, and now.... it was taken from me, and not something that was fixable in 3 weeks. After the 1st surgery, my right arm was wrapped around my waste for 5 weeks. I could not

lift it at all, was not allowed to, or able to. The Labrum was re-attached and could not risk it ripping off again.

I needed help with everything. I went from being on top of the world, record-breaking athlete, to someone who could not wash my own hair. The 1st surgery was February 21st 2007. The 2nd one was May 26th, and then the last one was in November 2007. I had no chance building myself up in between the surgeries, and was therefore on rock bottom when 2008 came around.

"I went from being on top of the world, record-breaking athlete, to someone who could not wash my own hair."



**CRITICAL BENCH: That is a lot of adversity you had to face. Then, in 2007 you had 3 surgeries and in the middle of those you had a severe kidney infection. What was that like for you?**

The kidney was not a fun experience. I was hospitalized after I came home from watching the USPF Nationals in Vegas in August 2007. I was there to meet my friend Hege Nielsen, and watch Ed Coan do his last meet. I made it to the competition, but never got to see Ed lift. I felt like I was getting the flu, and went back to the hotel room, and pretty much stayed there and by the pool (where I did not have to move much) the rest of the weekend.

Not having too much energy after my surgeries, this kidney infection really took me down. The doctor told me if I came in one day later, it could have been too late. I stayed in the hospital for a week and when I came out, I weighed only 114lbs.

After coming home it took months before I started getting my energy back. All I wanted to do was sleep, and I ran out of energy very fast. Then I had another surgery in the end of November.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Then you came back and competed in worlds. What drove you to come back after all of that? How did you go from being in an injured state to then making an amazing comeback?**

Right after I got the invitation from Amy Jackson, my boyfriend Brad and I were on our way to San Jose to Watch Jason "JP" Peterson do his 1st pro boxing fight, then to watch him do his 2nd one at the Playboy mansion, 2 weeks later, and winning them both. JP gave me the inspiration I needed to get back in the gym. Also knowing this would be my 4th national team, in the 3rd sport, for the 2nd country (Gymnastics, powerlifting and Fitness, for Norway and now the US) was a huge inspiration. It was time to wipe the dust off my lifting belt and give my 100%.

I started going to the gym 5 days a week. Eating a little more, and making sure I got my vitamins and minerals, but not forcing myself to eat anything. I eat when I was hungry, and not by the clock.

I decided not to over train this time. I had to start easy and slow to get my body used to lifting again, and avoiding getting injured.



**Mari Doing A Flip Over Her Dog As A Child**

**CRITICAL BENCH: What are your thoughts to those people who are afraid to hear about your injury story or ask you about it? What are your thoughts for those who feel bad for you and for those who are totally inspired by what you have to overcome?**

I don't think anyone should be afraid of hearing about my injuries, or to ask me about it. If you don't ask, you will not learn. With my experience, I hope people that have questions ask them, so they can avoid injuries like those that I have gone through. For those who feel bad for me.....have them call me or e-mail me, and I will give them my account number. Because being injured like this, makes it impossible to work. So donations are more than welcome.

For those who are inspired.....I hope I can inspire more. If what I have been through can help others in doing better, or making them believe they can go out and do it too. That is awesome!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What is your advice for other lifters who might be facing extreme injury or adversity of any type who want to give up?**

Never to give up. If you really want something, you make it happen.

If you are facing an extreme injury, it is important to have people around you that support you, and give you the time you need to heal. Stress will never make you a 100%. Let yourself heal all the way. Listen to your body. Know the difference between good and bad pain. Good pain is pain that will not hurt you. Bad pain is when you know something is going to break or tear. Don't push the bad pain too far, before you go and get it checked out.



**CRITICAL BENCH: You broke a new world record. Tell us what you lifted in kg and pounds and what the record meant to you?**

I lifted in the 56 kg weight class/123 lbs, and benched 142,5kg/314 lbs. 2nd place is 1st loser. It is all or nothing.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What has been your favorite, most emotional and powerful moment during your powerlifting journey?**

My most emotional, favorite and powerful moment was in Florida after my last lift, where I broke the world record. To do that, after what I have been through, with my boyfriend there, who has supported me through everything meant everything! Also, my mom and dad came all the way from Norway to cheer me on. They have not seen me compete in 7 years, and it meant the world to me that they were there.

**CRITICAL BENCH: That's awesome they were able to see you compete. During that contest it was your first time representing America, what was that like?**

I am very proud of being Norwegian but the Norwegian Powerlifting Federation made it almost impossible for me to compete and enjoy my sport if I was to represent Norway in the future. So being able to lift for the US team was an extra little victory for me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How is powerlifting different in America compared to in overseas?**

In America I think the lifters are better at having fun together. Cheering each other on, helping each other and doing what makes sense.

In Norway it is all by "the book", and for f\*\*\* sake, don't think you are better than anyone else! You also have to be member of a lifting club to compete over there. Not everyone has a lifting club close by, so I enjoy the fact that you can lift for your own "team" here. I enjoy lifting in and for America!



**CRITICAL BENCH: How is your personal training going? How do you inspire your clients? Is it harder to work after all of your surgeries? Did you have to build your business back up again?**

With all the surgeries, it was very difficult for me to be able to work for a very long time. Now I am back at scratch, and have to start building my personal training business up again.

I have also moved, and I am now in Dana Point area in southern California.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What do you enjoy doing away from powerlifting?**

I enjoy going places. It doesn't have to be far, or cost money, but just to see something different. It can be everything from another beach, to another coffee shop. I like to go on motorcycle rides, and I have a thing for rollercoaster's!

The big dipper in Santa Cruz is probably my favorite. I enjoy doing all these things together with my best friend and boyfriend Brad.



**CRITICAL BENCH:** Mari, is there such thing as being too strong?

Hell NO!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** That is the spirit! What is your diet and routine like? Has it changed?

My diet? What diet? He he. Since I was injured, I put the word diet in the closet. I eat what I want, when I want.

When I injured myself, I lost my appetite. It was more of a challenge to get kcal in me.

During 2007, I pretty much only managed to drink Muscle Milk, and some regular milkshakes. [Muscle Milk](#), so I could get the proteins, carb and good fat in me. The milkshakes to get some extra kcal.

When I started training again in June 2008, I tried to get a couple of meals of solid food in me. Like steak and potatoes, or chicken and rice. In addition to some Monster Muscle, and [Pre-Formanse from Cytosport](#)..

I eat when I am hungry, and not by the clock. My body tells me when it is time to feed it.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** How has your perception of powerlifting changed since you were injured?

While being injured and sick, I had no income, because I could not work. I was so lucky to have support from a great boyfriend, that is not rich, but manage to make ends meet. When you go and do what I did, coming back after injuries, and winning the world championship with little or close to nothing. I wonder how I could have done with full ride sponsorship that would have given me the opportunities to go and get the kind of care that top athletes usually get! I wonder.....???

**CRITICAL BENCH: Being talented in all, what is harder would you say powerlifting, bodybuilding or strongman?**

That would for sure be strongman.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What goes on in your mind before a big lift?**

Absolutely NOTHING! My way of focusing is to get rid of everything in my head. I have done my lifts so many times over and over again, that I should not have to think about technique or how I should lift. Just go out and do it. The best way to do that is to think of nothing.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Got advice. Speaking of advice, what is the best and worst advice you were ever told?**

Lets starts with one of the worst, or dumbest. A few years ago, several people said to me that I should not train with Charles Glass, because he only knew how to train bodybuilders. Charles is the bodybuilding guru, but what many people obviously don't know is that Charles used to be a very good gymnast, he also done powerlifting. He won the Ironman several times, and at that time, the Ironman was powerlifting and bodybuilding combined.

So Charles and I both have pretty much the same background. Who else would know better how to train my type of body? Glad I did not listen, because I went from a 236lbs bench press to a 363lbs . The best advice I got was from my boyfriend Brad, who was the one "forcing" me to go take an MRI of my shoulder and arm at the end of 2006. He actually drove 400miles from the Bay area to come down and make sure I went and got it done, because he knew something was wrong with me. I just didn't want to realize it.

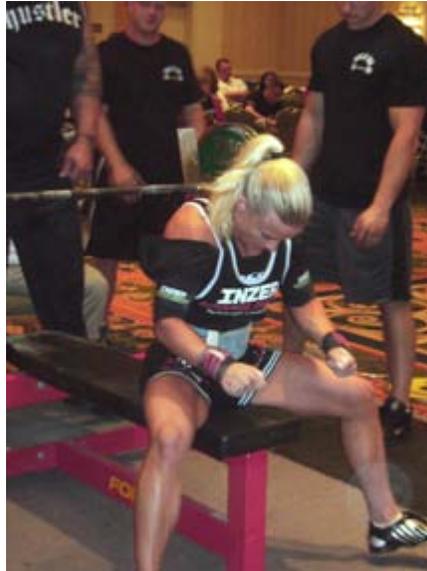
**CRITICAL BENCH: Mari, what a journey you have had! How do you want to be remembered?**

As a person who never made myself someone to feel sorry for, but appreciated as a strong person even in a bad situation.

**CRITICAL BENCH: With your attitude you will always be remembered as an amazing lifter and as an amazing human being on all levels! Mari, it has been fun interviewing you today. In closing, who would you like to thank?**



To get where I am right now, would not have been possible without the help and the support I have got from some very special people



I first off would like to start by thanking Brad Bloch. The meet in August of 2006 was actually our 2nd date. He came to watch me lift in Modesto, when I got injured. Not being together for very long, he knew that I needed help. He opened up his home for me, and took care of me when I was at my lowest. He picked me up from the floor and took me to the ER when I had my kidney infection. Then when I asked him to help me, and be my coach for the world championship, knowing he only seen one bench meet his whole life, there was not a question about it. He was there a 100%. He even put himself in a bench press shirt one day we went to train at Scott Mendelson's gym, so he could feel what I feel when I am lifting. He deserves a huge Thank You! I hope one day to be able to do for him what he has done for me.



Then a thank you to my mom and dad, for all the support through my whole life, and for coming to the US to see me.

Brads parents for the support while being sick, and for helping taking care of things outside the gym.

Lena Johannesen Natividad for being my friend, "big sister" and supporter.

Dr. Gerbino, for doing all my surgeries, and being the best doctor I ever had.

Jon Wiebe, Chris Hecht, Mark Harris, Jeff Calman, Carmine Gangemi, Hege Nielsen, Heidi Sighovd, Dave Hammond, Steve Denison, Ryan Miller, Bo, Andre, Kjell and Red, Timmy Boy, Tina Lithner, Gabe Sorensen, Shonie Carter,

Thank you so much to everyone, for everything from making my trip possible, to the phone calls, flowers, e-mails, hospital visits, unforgettable times and hugs.

Also Inzer for giving me bench press shirts, and being the best powerlifting gear in the world. To Cytosport for giving me excellent supplements to recover and build myself up.

At the end, I want to make a special thank you to a very special friend that is no longer with us.

Captain Matthew "Jett" Schaefer lost the fight to complication around cancer January 7th 2009.

Knowing what he was fighting, being in the middle of chemotherapy when I did my world championship Nov 20th, he was one of my biggest cheer leaders.

Jett was a pilot, model, and one hell of a guy. Rest in peace Jett.





# HYBRID ATHLETE RON H2O WATERMAN

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – January 2004*

## **Former WWE wrestler, Full Contact Fighter, Super Star Bodybuilder**

Ron Waterman is famous- Whether you know who he is from your VIDEO GAME... from following Full Contact Fighting, "Team Impact" watching the WWE or just walking past him in the streets, you can't miss him!! I remember seeing Ron Waterman Wrestle at the Pepsi arena and he was one of the most impressive looking men that I have ever seen and I have seen a lot.

While I was watching Ron compete in Albany, I honestly thought that I was watching the next Hulk Hogan, but unlike Hogan, Ron was an athlete, Ron was someone that could actually perform in the ring and move around like Kurt Angle, yet he was able to work the crowd like Hogan. Ron is no longer with the WWE and he went into the Ultimate Fighting Championships. He simply dominated everyone! Now he is in PRIDE fighting the best of the best and doing well! He even beat Cro Cop one of the best heavy weight fighters to ever live. However, no matter where Ron is, Ron is the type of man who generates power anywhere he goes whether he is beating someone up in the Octagon, or doing strength feats with the genetic freaks of Team Impact or whooping ass on your video game. Lets see what this hero and combatant had to say- Here at Critical Bench WE BRING YOU THE LEGEND HIMSELF, RON H2O WATERMAN!



### **Critical Bench: Ron tell us about yourself.**

Ron Waterman: I am 38yrs old and have been married to my wonderful wife Jody for 17yrs. We have 2 awesome boys, Justin 15 and Austin 10 both of whom were undefeated this Wrestling season.. Have to brag... I am a Minister with Team Impact [www.team-impact.com](http://www.team-impact.com) and love what I do. I am also still competing in Mixed Martial Arts with Pride, IFC, and Extreme Cagefighting.

### **Critical Bench: What got you started in lifting?**

Ron Waterman: Sports. I was a wrestler and understood at an early age that strength will help you in many ways.. I began lifting weights at the age of 14 and made it part of my lifestyle.

**Critical Bench: How did you get sooo huge and ripped?**

Ron Waterman: I have been training in the weight room for 23 years and am very consistent. I eat very clean, and take care of my body with quality supplements.

**Critical Bench: Is it hard to spend time in the gym with your active life?**

Ron Waterman: The amount of time to spend in the gym is hard with a family, and career. I train at 5am everyday so I don't take time away from my family. I also train with my wife so we can spend as much time as possible together. My wife is in very good shape as well and benches 225lbs.

**Critical Bench: That's a great bench- So what is your best bench? And other upper body lifts?**

Ron Waterman: I have a 500lb bench, and a 315lb military press. I do strict flat chest flies with 90lb dumbbells.



**Critical Bench: What motivates you to be the best?**

Ron Waterman: I have a competitive spirit, if I am going to do something I am going to give it my all, and be happy with the results.

**Critical Bench: What do you think makes the difference between a champion and an Average Joe?**

Ron Waterman: Consistency. Never giving up, getting up when you fall and you will fall. Keeping a positive outlook on life. Being a champion on the inside is better than any medal or Trophy you will ever receive.

**Critical Bench: What is the biggest mistakes beginners make?**

Ron Waterman: Expecting to be the best overnight and taking shortcuts to get there. Hard work and determination will get you to the top. If you want it bad enough and your motives are pure, nothing can stop you.

**Critical Bench: Can you give us a major piece of advice that you have learned over the years?**

Ron Waterman: One thing I have learned over the years is that your intake of nutrition is more important than what and how you lift in the gym. If your Protein intake is not there and good calories everyday, your not going to grow. Keep track of your supplementation also so you know what supplements your body reacts to. Journal your diet and workout so you know what's working and what's not. Also don't get stuck in the same routine, it's easy to do the same thing over and over in the gym. Your body is smart and won't grow unless you are constantly changing things up with sets, reps and exercises. A good training partner is key to growth.

**Critical Bench:: Great advice! what were some of your most memorable experiences being a WWE wrestler/ Ohio Valley Wrestler and Full Contact Fighter?**

Ron Waterman: I have met some good friends, and have traveled all around the world. It was a good experience for a short time to travel with WWE, nothing like performing in front of 60 thousand fans in Madison Square Garden .

Fighting around the world in MMA is much different, you need to be in a different state of mind. It keeps the competitiveness in me and pays very well overseas. Japanese fans are great.

**Critical Bench: A lot of us are curious, just how strong are the guys in the WWE?**

Ron Waterman: Brock is one of the only guys I have ever trained with that trains as intensely as I do. He has farm boy strength, but works very hard. We both bench around the 500lbs mark and would stack about 1300lbs on the sled once a week, for a leg workout. Big Show is a freaky strong guy for not training hard, I saw him press Brock in Practice one day like he was a toothpick. Mark Henry is obviously very strong, his legs are crazy strong, he deeps squats well over 600lbs for easy reps. Cane and Blado are very strong guys.

**Critical Bench: Ron, most of the WWE wrestlers look great. They are huge and great athletes. Can the average wrestler in the WWE bench 405?**

Ron Waterman: No, most can't... Most aren't nearly as strong as one would think or train as hard as one would think. In fact most just train to stay off the injury reserved list...

**Critical Bench: are there any funny stories you would like to share?**

Ron Waterman: I was a short fat kid in Grade school and decided way back then I wanted to be a bodybuilder. I wanted to look like Arnold . It always inspired me when I saw these guys. It's all it took was a vision back in 6th grade. Anyone can reach the top if they can see themselves there. Never give up on a dream.

**Critical Bench: Any closing words?**

Ron Waterman: I take each workout as a competition and don't leave until I am totally drained of everything I have for that body part. Train intensely, don't waste time in the gym. I use supersets and trisets for almost everything to alleviate dead time. If not I do crunches and calves between sets. You can keep up with my career and email me questions at [www.ronwaterman.com](http://www.ronwaterman.com)

# BENCH PRESS CHAMP MARK CARTER

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – April 2002*

## **BT: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF?**

Mark Carter: I grew up on the out skirts of Columbus, Ohio in a city called Gahanna. I began boxing at age 6 won the Golden Gloves at 17. Began wrestling at 12 thru 17. As a Sophomore in HS I decided to put all my efforts in football and weight training. I was bench pressing 410 lbs my sophomore year. Went on to play as a Fullback at the University of Cincinnati, Later played semi-pro ball for the Columbus Metros. At 22 got the urge to head west and never looked back. In California I worked as a personal trainer, as a coach and director in a regimented juvenile program changing young lives for the better. My career goals would take place in the fitness industry running several clubs for 24 hour fitness in the Los Angeles area. Later a small group of friends and I would travel across the country to start our own fitness chain called the Rush fitness complexes residing in Knoxville, TN

## **BT: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BE ONE OF THE BEST BENCHERS IN THE WORLD NOT LONG AFTER NEARLY LOSING YOUR LIFE?**

Mark Carter: I'll never forget what one doctor said while I was in ICU. He said, "If it weren't for your great physical shape we really don't think you would have made it through this one." That statement stuck with me for three years and played an important role as I began my come back. I really felt God had a plan for me being here. The Bench is now making sense.



## **BT: HOW DID YOU CONQUER ADVERSITY FROM NEARLY BEING DEAD, TO LIVING IN CONSTANT PAIN, TO BEING THE ONLY MAN EVER OVER 40 TO BENCH PRESS OVER 700?**

Mark Carter: It wasn't easy and there were some very tough times. Today I feel pain with every step I take. I use that feeling of pain in a positive direction. The pain reminds me that I was given another chance and I will make the most out of my business and powerlifting goals.

**BT: HOW DID IT FEEL TO SET A WORLD RECORD IN THE BENCH PRESS AFTER GOING THROUGH SO MUCH OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS?**

Mark Carter: It was like a dream come true. I had the flu days before the Pittsburgh competition. I felt real weak and decided not to go. It was only hours before my flight something inside told me to go. I packed my bags and had my wife drive me to the airport. I had to experience what powerlifting was all about. I felt better the next day weighing in at 212. I signed up for both the masters and the open class. In my very first powerlifting competition ever, at 43 years of age, I blasted 600.7 lbs off my chest setting a new APF world record. Most of all everyone was so friendly and helpful. January 18th, 2003 will be one day I will always remember.

**BT: WHILE RECOVERING FROM YOUR SEVERE ANAPHYLATIC SHOCK WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND?**

Mark Carter: When I came to in ICU I was surrounded by doctors calling out my name. With swollen eyes and blurred vision, I looked at my swollen fingers, arms, upper torso and tubes running everywhere. I wanted a drink of water but I couldn't swallow. At this point I knew something had gone terribly wrong. I looked over and there was my wife crying out my name over and over. It was just the beginning of my battle with unanswered health issues over the next few years.

**BT: MARK, WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST BENCH TO DATE?**

One month prior to competing at the arnold classic I trained at Westside barbell. George Halbert and Louie Simmons helped me with some new benching techniques and I put up a 705 bench at 218lbs. This is my personal best. Now that I'm injury free I'm starting to make my comeback. At the age of 45 I will shoot for 720 at 220lbs.

**BT: WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO COMPETE IN THE BENCH PRESS?**

Mark Carter: Once I was released to workout, I hooked up with ex-pro quarterback Heath Shuler. Our workouts got intense and my strength quickly came back. Muscle memory is not a myth. JB Fields our fitness manager and a powerlifter was watching me bench one day. He said, "You got to do a competition". He worked with me with what little time we had and I picked out my first competition 4 weeks later.

**BT: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO BE THE BEST?**

Mark Carter: To be the best is instilled in my heart and soul. My father would tell me over and over "You are one to be number one. He would say this up until the day he passed away. I wear the tattoo on my right arm IM12B#1 I live my life by my own 6-D principles. Dedication-Determination-Discipline-Devotion-Desire-Drive. My mission statement I wear on my back, Passion, Vision and Pride.

**BT: WHAT GOES THROUGH YOUR HEAD JUST BEFORE YOUR ABOUT TO BENCH 600+?**

Mark Carter: Visually seeing the completion of the bench. Using fear to my advantage. I once looked at the bar as the back end of a truck and I had to lift it to keep it from crushing my chest.

Can you imagine the adrenaline rush. You must use it to your advantage. JM Blakely is someone who writes on this and someone I really enjoy reading.

**BT: HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF BENCHING?**

Mark Carter: Someday I hope to see one set of rules. One official bench shirt (single ply). One recognized sanction. With the right ingredients, it could become one of the greatest strongman shows on the planet. People will always ask the question, "How much can you bench," Bench America is the closest in taking this step to that idea.

**BT: WHAT IS THE BIGGEST MISTAKES YOU SEE BEGINNERS MAKE?**

Mark Carter: I am a beginner. I am what you call an "old rookie". Some mistakes young lifters make in the gym is they don't believe in variety. Change is good in a workout from time to time. Another mistake I see young lifters making is listening to many people with different ideas about lifting. You can't stay focused on your goals if your getting different advice from so many avenues.

**BT: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL VIEWERS?**

Mark Carter: Remember it's never to late. Never give up and take pride in everything you do in life. Pride is simply your signature on a job well done. Dreams do come true if you believe and have faith. Yours in Health and Power!!!!

# BODYBUILDER GREGG VALENTINO

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – April 2009*

**CRITICAL BENCH:** This is Ben Tatar from Critical Bench and I am here with Gregg Valentino. Hi Gregg, welcome to Critical Bench. How is life in your world today?

Life is beautiful, it is a good thing.. Any day you wake up and you're still alive it is a good thing.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** First off, you use to be known as the man who had the biggest/most muscular arms in the world being 27 inches. Your 27 inch arms aren't 27 inches anymore. Do you miss your former 27 inch arms?

I do not miss my 27 inch arms. Sometimes I miss being more jacked up. However, when you're almost 275lbs at 5'5 and a half, that is a lot of weight for a little guy.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Greg back when you had your 27 inch arms, would you trade or give your 27 inch arm size up for anything?

For my family I would. People have a misconception of things. I could care less about those things. I'm not one of those dudes who is like "wow, dude I'm jacked I am big." there are a lot of things that are more important to me. I have children.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Gregg, since you use to have 27 inch arms, did you arm wrestle a lot? Did you get challenged to arm wrestle a lot?

I use to do it. I don't anymore. I was very athletic when I was younger.



**CRITICAL BENCH: Some people know you as your nick name "the most hated man in bodybuilding." Do you like being a hated man in bodybuilding?**

I don't think that I was the most hated man. I think I was the most misunderstood man. That column was done by Chris Chudler. I was in my 7th year.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Tell us exactly what it was like walking into a room with 27 inch arms? A lot of people get big and want attention, but never to the point of having 27 inch arms. Explain to us the experience!**

I am like a chick with big tits that walks in a room. Some people are like whoa look at those tits, those are ridiculous... Other people like it. I am fine with it.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was the drawback of having 27 inch arms? Some people say you took synthol. How would you address such an issue?**

I just don't like being accused of things that I don't do. I did not use synthol. Yes, I shot my arms local. People who know me, know that I was always big and natural from high school. If you choose 33cs eq and not synthol. I shot 2xxa into my biceps. Oil is oil. 33cs of oil are oil. So, I never shot synthol and I trained like a mad man! People who don't know me are the ones who talk about me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: When did you start lifting?**

I started lifting in 1972 and I started bodybuilding in 1973. I was competing before there was an MCC I use to run all the shows in New York. In 1979 I didn't even know what a steroid was! I have been around for a long time. I am 49 as we do this interview.

**CRITICAL BENCH: When was your first experience using steroids?**

Well, I went from being a gym owner with NPC to putting weights back in a gym so I needed an income. They said "You know these bodybuilders? You see who needs juice?" That is when I started using juice, I said screw this and I started taking the steroids. My friend started shooting d12 and I started doing the oil thing and taking shots.

**CRITICAL BENCH: We have all seen you on TLC. Everyone from serious lifters, lifting fans and non lifters has seen you on TLC. We know that reporters get things wrong as the motto goes "what leads bleeds." Please, expel the TLC myth for us!**



When you see me on YOUTUBE and TLC, it is a complete myth. You see me on there flexing that bicep and that huge fake balloon that had nothing to do with steroids, that had to do with

my son hitting my in the arm with a baseball! You see, I had a BROKEN blood vessel, just like in the movie rocky, where he gets cut and drains his arm. You see, I drained my arm with blood, not puss. If it was puss, I wouldn't survive. Nobody would survive.

Also, I didn't almost die, not even close. I just drained it with blood. What did people think? I just shot one bicep and not the other? It was a soft blow, it was not puss it was an injury!

**CRITICAL BENCH: TLC said that your arm looked flat.**

The whole TLC thing was a farce. They said look at my arm that it was flat. It was two different things. They merged it and they said the balloon arm was from the infection and it was not. If you re-watch it, you will see blood coming down my bicep. I'm like it looks like a murder scene. The cup was pure blood and there weren't any puffs in there. It is pure dark dead blood, like a leaky pipe in your house.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Today, how do people in general respond when they see you? Do they treat you well?**

When people see me now, they are nice to me. I get mobbed! I'm almost embarrassed by the whole fame thing. All I hear is "Can I get my pic taken with you, can I have an autograph?" It is humbling, but I don't look at myself like that. I'm nothing like the guy people perceive me to be. I never drank coffee, I don't drink tea, I did take caffeine, and I never even tasted diet soda! It has nothing to do with bodybuilding. I have a reputation of being a party animal, but it is not the case.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Gregg, tell us how you use to train your arms to get them so big!**

I use to do 2-3 reps, but I would do 100 sets. I don't do any of that now, but I did that back then.

I also want to say that there is no overtraining, only under- recuperation. People just don't understand I use to do shoulders for hours/ 100 chest... Again it is not overtraining, just recovering that much harder.

**CRITICAL BENCH: So far in your iron journey what has been your most powerful moment and worst moment?**

Powerful-- getting arrested

Worst moment of my life? My girlfriend killing herself was really bad. My mother dying was really bad. My arrest was bad because they ranked me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Was jail tough? Were the guys in jail tough?**

Being stuck in a cage was tough, but the guys weren't tough. The worst part of jail is you have



no freedom.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was your funniest moment in bodybuilding?**

I have a zillion of them. Probably when I was in Lake George at the Holiday Inn. Well, I had to go to the bathroom really bad and it was one of those situations where you either make the poop in a bag or a toilet and I went to take a poop and I splashed on an old man's feet! It was diarrhea right on his feet!! I missed the bowl and it went out on his feet and he punched the wall and went to the desk and through his shoes and ran in there! It was funny!!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was your craziest moment?**

My craziest moment was from 1994. I was fighting Mark Goldberg and I was on the Howard Stern show for that and all these guards were kicking my butt. I had him in a choke hold and he could not get out of it! I got thrown out and they ripped all my clothes trying to get in...

He was wearing an Elmer Fudge hunting rabbits, flaps on the front and side, hunting hats.....

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was your favorite moment?**

The birth of my 2 children! They mean the world to me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Do you want your kids to be huge like you? Are they into bodybuilding?**

They are nothing as big as me! My son Paul is the lead guitarist, tattoos and enjoys skate boarding. He goes to school to be a chef. He is total opposite from me.

My daughter is very athletic and very close to me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Gregg, I heard you are suppose to be in a movie called Muscle Bound USA with WWE Champion HHH. What is that like and suppose to be about?**



Jim Union, head of the security, a big bald guy that brings out the wrestlers like the rock brought me out... it is kind of like Bigger, Faster and Stronger. I'm one of the featured guys.

**CRITICAL BENCH: You told me that when you were in the movie Bigger Faster Stronger that you were much more athletic in the batting cage than the movie portrayed you to be. Address this for us.**

BY THE WAY I hit most of the balls in the Bigger, Faster and Stronger. I was hitting them in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd round and then I got tired. That really wore me out.

**CRITICAL BENCH: I am having fun interviewing you. I'm going to name some groupies of people and tell us how they respond to your arm mass!**

- **Beautiful babes:** 50/50 half like it, half hate it! When I am in a club I have no trouble getting hot babes. Some fat slobs get chicks and guys who have muscles don't! They like guys who can make them laugh and stuff. Girls always say "OMG FEEL THAT.." or "that is tooo much, you over did it!"
- **Old people:** 50/50 old people are more astounded by the whole thing.
- **Teenagers:** teenagers think it is cool... "YO DUDE that is badass, that is diesel!!!"
- **Other huge bodybuilders:** they like it, but they are obnoxious. They are like "you're shooting something!" They think they KNOW everything and you can't tell them anything.
- **Fitness models and girls who workout seriously:** they are good. Bodybuilders kiss my ass because they think I can get them into a magazine. I'm big Willie in that sense even if they think it is disgusting. When I go to the Arnold Classic and all these shows they want my number because they act like I'm a hottie and I'm a little aware of that horseshit! I'm very much aware, I'm from the streets.....

**CRITICAL BENCH: You have your Random Freak column in Muscular Development. Tell us some of the things you do in that and why girls go psycho over you because you also choose the babe of the month for the Magazine?**

Yes. I have my Random Freak section in Muscular Development. I choose the babe of the Month. I always get emails like "Hi, I heard you're the guy from MD and I heard you are such a sweet heart." I pick 50 girls a month for that. They think they will get over that on me!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Since you run a section in a magazine in regards to models, tell us what your turn ons and turn offs are when it comes to women in general. Do you like mixing girls with your bodybuilding?**

I don't want a girl who says "don't eat that pizza, that is too many carbs," I like small cute girls and I don't like mixing girls with bodybuilding. I like girls and I like bodybuilding but not together. I don't like girls who are like "can we leave, how much longer." I like a feminine soft girl. Not an amazon girl. Don't get me wrong, I respect female bodybuilding but it isn't for me to date.



**CRITICAL BENCH: What message do you want to give to your supporters? What about your haters?**

To my supporters, I say thank you and I appreciate the support. Thank you for the support. To my haters, I say F-off. How do you hate somebody you never met because you don't like their arms?

**CRITICAL BENCH: What makes Gregg happy?**

What makes me happy is my family/ my children. I would jump in a pool of sharks and let that shark eat me alive

**CRITICAL BENCH: What is next for you?**

You shall see me on ESPN and lots of Big Media.

**CRITICAL BENCH: If you could change one thing about yourself through a super power that isn't human what would you choose and why?**

At times I wish I was invisible. If people want to shake my hand, I'm gonna give it to them if they feel that strongly to me. I can't say no to my fans.

My girlfriend says " If you don't blow anyone off, then don't complain." I make people feel like they are my best friend because I know how these people feel. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Gregg, it has been a lot of fun talking to you today. Your overall character is just as catchy and unique as your massive arms were and you are a man who must be remembered for having arm mass beyond belief and also for your dynamite genuine personality. In closing who would you like to thank?**

I would like to thank Steve Blecman who has given me the opportunity to be where I am and who I am. My column is the MOST read column in the magazine!

If people want to talk to me they have to come to MD.

# FIGHTER FRANK SHAMROCK

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – November 2004*

**1) BT: How did it all begin? What motivated you to be a full contact fighter?**

Frank Shamrock: Wow, you know, I got in by accident. I dropped out of college, my dad wanted me to get a job, and he told me to do the wrestling thing. My brother was doing it and the rest was history.



**2) BT: What was the craziest thing that you have ever experienced in a fight?**

Frank Shamrock: Well, one time I was so dehydrated in a fight that my mouth was so dry and since my mouth was so dry, I had trouble breathing for 8 minutes. So I clinched in the stand up wrestling position and I actually licked the sweat off my opponents shoulders! And after I licked the sweat off my opponents shoulder, I recovered. Then I was able to kick his ass!!

**3) BT: What fights will you remember the most?**

Frank Shamrock: I will never forget when I defeated Olympic Wrestler Kevin Jackson in seconds. The other most memorable fight was when I made Tito Ortiz tap out.

**4) BT: Who was your toughest opponent ever?**

Frank Shamrock: My toughest opponent was Enson Inoue.

**5) BT: What is your mental training like before a fight?**

Frank Shamrock: I do a lot of visualization before a fight and I do a lot of visualization before my training. I also do a lot of deep breathing and stretching. The deep breathing and stretching really does it for me.

**6) BT: Tell us about your weight training routine, diet and cardio before a fight?**

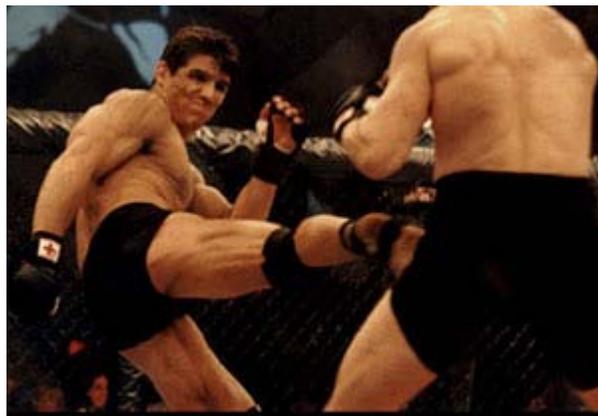
Frank Shamrock: I train with weights 4 days a week and I use a general push and pull routine with my whole body in one week. For cardio I do ten weeks of cardio vascular training and then I do my sprawling. I then do track and field conditioning and plyometrics. For Submissive fighting, I spare, wrestling two days a week and I do two-three sessions per day. Each session is about an hour and 20 minutes long.

**7) BT: What was the coolest thing that you ever did while you were training?**

Frank Shamrock: For the coolest thing, one day I was doing plyometric rope drills and before I did them I was eating sour cream and onion chips. Right in the middle of the plyometric rope drills, I vomited my lunch all over the place right in mid air.

**8) BT: Awesome. Hey, my friend the president of [www.criticalbench.com](http://www.criticalbench.com) Mike Westerdal and I made a bet. He thinks that Ken Shamrock has benched a little over 500 (525) in his prime and I think his bench press max was in the late 400s (475) and that he just missed 500. Do you know what Ken's best bench was?**

Frank Shamrock: Well Ken was way up in the 400s during his prime. He never hit 500. I believe his best bench was 475.



**9) BT: So Frank what was it like having Ken Shamrock as your brother?**

Frank Shamrock: He was a pretty nice dude. He is my brother, so he isn't too much different than me. We are much the same.

**10) BT: Frank who do you think is the greatest fighter that ever lived?**

Frank Shamrock: Me. I am the best fighter ever.

**11) BT: Being the World's Best Fighter what would you like to tell the beginner who wants to be the next World's Best?**

Frank Shamrock: My advice would be to get in good shape and find a good teacher.

Check out Frank's book: <http://shop.store.yahoo.com/karatemart1/franshamultr2.html>

**12) BT: What is the best advice that a teacher has given you, and what is the worse advice a teacher has ever given you?**

Frank Shamrock: The best advice that I ever heard was "Keep your hands up". The worse advice was that I had a coach that told me to put heating rubs on after you train. The problem is after you train your pores are opened so it goes into your flesh and burns it.

**13) BT: Who is your biggest mentor?**

Frank Shamrock: My mentor is Maurice Smith.

**14) What are your future goals?**

Frank Shamrock: After I change the world through martial arts, I'm going to do a REALITY SHOW. I'm then going to start a fighting league, have children and I'm going to keep working out.



**15) How do you see the future of full contact fighting?**

Frank Shamrock: It's going to be the next big sport. I don't know what flavor it will be when it gets there, but it will be the next big sport.

**16) BT: Frank is there anything else you would like to tell the thousands of people reading your interview?**

Frank Shamrock: I'm opening a big new Training Center in San Jose! Stop by, it's just beautiful!

<http://www.frankshamrock.org>

# BODYBUILDER FLEX WHEELER

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – August 2007*

## **Christ Has Motivated IFBB Legend Flex To Train Drug Free**

**1) Critical Bench: Flex, you're a man that needs little introduction but why don't you humor us and tell us a little bit about yourself.**

My name is Kenneth Wheeler, and I was born on August 23rd, 1965 in Fresno, California. I have one sister and six brothers. Besides bodybuilding, I love the martial arts. In fact, if I were 10 years younger, I'd be all over the UFC. I also love God. He is the creator of all things. And I am unashamed to claim Christ as my Savior.

**2) Critical Bench: What was your favorite bodybuilding competition and why?**

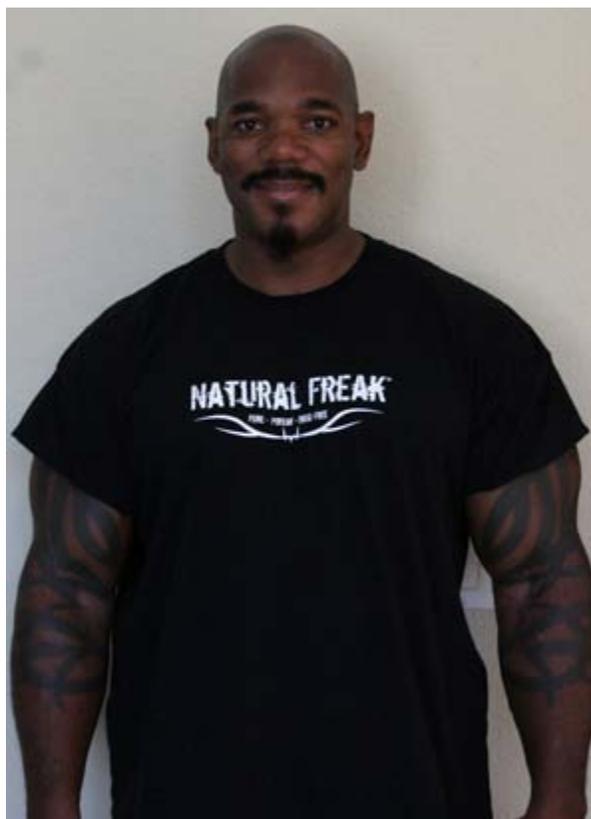
Actually, I don't really have favorite. I loved all the competitions I competed in. The reason why is that I'm just a predator when it comes to competing. I love the art of combat, whether it's bodybuilding or fighting professionally. It's great to challenge yourself and push yourself to be at a world-class level and to compete against other athletes who are world class. What else could you ask for?

**3) Critical Bench: Flex, who was your favorite bodybuilder growing up?**

Honestly, I didn't really know of any bodybuilders when I was growing up, other than any local heroes in hometown of Fresno, California. Unfortunately, I wasn't well off enough to be able to buy magazine or anything like that. So I didn't ever really know of anyone or hear of anyone, or even know what bodybuilding was all about on a global scale until I actually competed in the California show in 1989.

**4) Critical Bench: Flex, you've used steroids and became one of the greatest bodybuilders in the world. Then I heard you had a kidney transplant. What changed and what motivated you to stop taking steroids and become drug free?**

Yeah, I did use what I like to call "sports technology drugs". What caused me to change was a couple of things. First, I found out I had a very rare kidney disease called Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis, or FSGS for short. It's the most aggressive and deadliest kidney disease



know to mankind. There isn't a cure for it, so I have to be careful and take care of myself. Ironically, all the drugs I used had nothing to do with my disease. Second, what really caused me to change and motivated me to stop taking sports technology drugs and start training drug-free is my commitment to Christ, not to mention having better overall health and fitness. But my number one motivator was Christ Himself.

**5) Critical Bench: Jesus is King! You look better than ever drug free! You take the [Kre-Alkalyn EFX creatine product by All American EFX](#)! Tell us how you were introduced to this product, how it works, and why you think it's more useful to take than drugs?**

The way I was first introduced to [Kre-Alkalyn EFX](#) was when I was in Italy at a tradeshow. A young man approached me, and he started telling me about the product. I didn't really take him too seriously because everybody is always trying to sell me something. But he gave a small sample that had five purple capsules in it. A couple of weeks later, I tried them and was really amazed that a product could work that fast and was also natural and legal. I mean, there are high-performance sports technology drugs out there that take weeks or months to get into your system. Because of that, I called All American EFX and requested a bottle of the full product. I tried them and also had my friends try them. We were all amazed that something like this could actually work that well. A little later I called the company again and spoke with the President, Brian Andrews. Within a week, I was on a plane to meet with Brian, Jeff Golini, and Bruce Butterbredt at their 110,000 square foot manufacturing facility. Then, just a month later, I signed a contract with them, and we were ready to go. To answer your original question, the major reasons why I think Kre-Alkalyn EFX is more useful overall than sports technology drugs is that it works, it's safe and it's legal.

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### Kre-Alkalyn® EFX Creatine...

With pH-Correct technology:  
The patented breakthrough that fixed  
Monohydrate...the King of Creatine.

EFX...The first and original brand.  
The birthplace of Kre-Alkalyn®.



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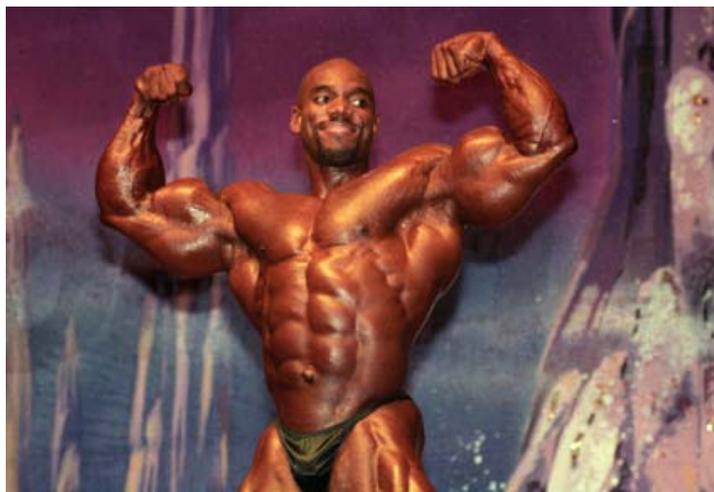
**6) Critical Bench: AAEFX now provides sports nutrition to Olympic, NFL and AFL professional athletes! Can you discuss a few of the different products that these athletes use and why they work so well? Why do you love these products so much Flex?**

I'm proud to say that we do have a lot of Olympic, NFL and other professional athletes use our products globally. Obviously, the one main reason why they use them is because they work! Our company is one of the very few, if not the only one, that tests our products for 16 banned substances. So it stands to reason they would use our Kre-Alkalyn EFX and also Nytric EFX because of the strength increases and the way it gets the blood flowing. Another one is Kre-Celerator before they go out and train or out on the field. It's going to help them get the nutrients and stuff they need for more energy, but without stimulants. After they finish, they'll take Kre-Generator to replenish what they lost so they can recover and grow faster.

Some like using Lean-Fix to help decrease their body fat, for more energy and increase thermogenesis. The same with our Liquid L-Carnitine. This one is a "no-brainer" because it also helps reduce body fat and tastes great. Probably one of our hottest running products right now has to be our Pure Liquid Amino, which is the number one natural ingredient in building muscle mass and overall size. I think another one of our hot products they might be interested in using is our Ionic Whey Supreme Protein. This stuff literally just dissolves in water; it tastes great and is full of protein and nutrients. One scoop has only 2.2 grams of fat and zero saturated fat and cholesterol. It also has only 185 milligrams of sodium, which is super low. For people on a low carb diets, it only has 4.3 grams of carbohydrates of which just 3 are sugar. So this is why I think so many elite athletes now use our products on a global scale.

**7) Critical Bench: It's nice to see a supplement company that actually does it's research. Visit AAEFX to read more about the supps mentioned above by visiting <http://www.aefx.com>. Flex, I read your book and it was one of the most interesting bodybuilding books I've ever read before. Can you give us a summary about your book for those who might want to read it but haven't yet?**

Thank you! I really tried my best to share all my "ups" and my "downs". Basically, it's about the ride of Flex Wheeler from the age of 13 or so, and it ends right around the age of 36. I share all my trials and tribulations, all the things I went through. I go very in-depth with all the different battles and struggles and demons I had throughout my life. I think that basically I've been through so many things that there aren't too many rooms I couldn't walk into and feel totally comfortable, whether I'm dealing with a child who has been molested, beaten or on welfare. Even dealing with neglect or having deadly disease you have to face, making millions and being a superstar athlete and then losing all that. Then, making money back again. Having multiple surgeries and so one. So whether you are a millionaire or pro athlete or just a regular "Joe Blow", on welfare, or someone who has been molested, or abused, or something like that, I can share stories with you. Overall, what I'm trying to do is express and share all the things I've been through to help people see that if I can overcome those things, so can they. There are millions of people who've been through one or more of these same things that I've been through. But very seldom do they have the world as their stage. So I want to share the things to hopefully inspire another kid or anyone else who can relate to my story. They can shoot for their dreams, regardless of their past or circumstances.



*Photo by Raymond Cassar. Used with permission from Flex Wheeler/All American EFX.*

**8) Critical Bench: Since writing your book, what has changed in your life?**

Wow! Literally everything! I mean just the kidney transplant alone that I had back in 2003, which is pretty much right where the book stops, completely changed my life. In fact, so much has changed, I think there might be a volume 2 just tell it all. It's been a whirlwind. Basically, I can sum it up by saying that compared to everything that happened to me during the timeline of my book, probably as much as three times that much has happened since then.

**9) Critical Bench: Today what are your stats? And what are some of your greatest feats of strength that you've performed in training?**

The number one thing to me is my willingness to fight for my relationship with Christ. That is number one to me. There are a million people who are stronger than me and better than me in different ways, and overall Christ is first. I want to live a life that is seen worthy in His eyes. Some of my greatest stats other than that is holding the record currently for winning the Iron Man more times than anyone else in history, which is 5 times, and also winning the Arnold Classic 4 times. That one is even listed in the Guinness Book of World Records. Being called "one of the best bodybuilders of all time" by Arnold Schwarzenegger also ranks right up there. Just knowing that people like yourselves who want to know about my life, and fans all over the world who consider me to be one of the best athletes in the world, those are some of the most promising things that I take to heart.

Bottom line, probably the biggest thing is just being accepted for who I am, no matter where I go. Pretty much people just want to be accepted for who they are and not looked at because they are black, white, Mexican, or Asian, or Latino, or straight, gay; just being accepted for who you are. One of the greatest gifts I have is being able to go anywhere in the world and be accepted for who I am and what I've accomplished.

**10) Critical Bench: Tell us about your on season training and off season training today. Tell us about your diet. How are they both different from the past?**

They way I train and eat now isn't too different from the way I trained before. Obviously, I don't throw up the big weights I once did, but I still have the same mindset I did when I was training before because it works. Why break something that isn't broken, right? As far as my diet, I don't have to go as hardcore there. I'm not up in the 600 grams range of protein. I don't have to be so strict on eating 7 or 8 times a day, and I can be a little more lenient on what I'm doing. So basically, I'm still following along the same lines of eating, dieting and training where I did before. Only it's just not quite as intense. In other words, it isn't going to make or break me if I don't hit my numbers that day as far as my overall caloric intake or whatnot.

**11) Critical Bench: So far in your bodybuilding journey and life journey what has been your-**

**Favorite moment -**

No specific one. I just always loved being able to perform to a great audience globally. It is a beautiful feeling; the apex of everything I worked so hard for, all coming together.

**Scariest moment -**

Obviously, the times where I've been tested in my life. Whether it was driving 170 miles an hour and crashing, which nearly paralyzed me. Over-dieting and ending up in the hospital. Last but not least, finding out about my deadly kidney disease, the multiple surgeries related to it and now the daily threat to my life that it still presents.

**Most emotional moment -**

There have been so many! Winning the USA, winning the Iron Man multiple times, winning the Arnold Classic multiple times, and having the best Pro debut in the history of bodybuilding. Having my little boy and my little girl, marrying my wonderful wife. It's just way too hard to narrow down to just one, bro.

**The moment that changed you the most -**

It would have to be when I was completely broken as a person; I was in the hospital having surgery after surgery based around my kidney transplant. Basically, I had 9 surgeries in 11 weeks. That was probably the most challenging part of my life.

**That's intense Flex! The moment you will remember the most -**

When we were kings. We roamed the earth and we were kings. It was the era of guys like Shawn Ray, Kevin Levrone, and Paul Dillett. We were at our apex. In my opinion, I think the 90s were probably the greatest time for me and historically for bodybuilding.

**12) Critical Bench: What has bodybuilding taught you about life? And what does bodybuilding mean to you?**

Bodybuilding has taught me a lot of things, both good and bad. It's taught me to fight for what's mine. It's also taught me about what I never want to go through again. It's taught me that my body is more important than winning shows. It has given me the ability to travel the world and see things I had never seen before. It's given me the ability to take care of my family. What bodybuilding means most to me now is to try and pass on all the positive things that I've learned and went through so that the next generation can enjoy all the great benefits the sport and lifestyle can give them. It's also important to teach them all the bad things too that I went through so they won't have to go through those same things. They can live through my mistakes and avoid them.

**13) Critical Bench: List the 5-10 accomplishments you feel most proud of!**

Number one is getting to know Christ. Next is meeting my wife Madeline. Having my children. Retiring and finding out what life is really all about. I've been able to fall back in love with my wife and children again; now I appreciate them even more. Learning to appreciate who and what I am and what I've accomplished. Meeting Arnold Schwarzenegger and winning his show more times than anyone else. Being considered one of the best bodybuilders of all time. Being considered a freak of nature. Probably what I am most proud of are all the memories I have now that can never be taken away from me.

**14) Critical Bench: How's your family and kids doing?**

Everybody is just blessed and doing great. My daughter Brandy, my grandchildren, my son Kennen, my son Darius, and my daughter Nia, and my beautiful wife, Madeline. Everyone is just doing wonderful.

**15) Critical Bench: What are your future goals?**

To change the world through health, nutrition and through being strengthened by Jesus Christ.

**16) Critical Bench: Amen. In closing is there anything else you would like to say or anyone who you would like to thank?**

I just want to beg everyone to dare to dream. Don't be scared to dream. Go for it! Find out as much as you can about whatever it is you want to accomplish, and then get it done! Believe in Christ. Have a relationship with Him, and put Him first, and you never can go wrong. Finally, a big "Thank You" to anyone who has ever enjoyed what I've done. And also to anybody who I've ever offended during my career, I beg your forgiveness. Unfortunately, I am only a man who has made many mistakes along the way. God bless you all, I love you all. It's been a great run!!!

# NFL PRO BOWLER BRENDON AYANBADEJO

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com – May2008*



**1) Critical Bench: It's Ben Tatar from [www.criticalbench.com](http://www.criticalbench.com) and I am here with Brendon Ayanbadejo from the NFL. Brendon is not only an NFL athlete but he has played in the 2007 Super Bowl and Pro Bowls, including the 2008 Pro Bowl. Brendon it is great to have you here with Critical Bench today! Introduce yourself to Critical Bench readers!**

My name is Brendon Ayanbadejo. I have played in the NFL for 5 years. I have played for 3 years as a Bear and now I'm playing for the Ravens. I played in the 2007 Super Bowl and Pro Bowl as well as the 2008 Pro Bowl. I play outside linebacker but I am known as a special teams guru.

**2) Critical Bench: Brendon, what was it like winning the NFC championship and then going to the Superbowl? Tell us about what it was like being a part of a Super Bowl experience!**

The Super Bowl was amazing. It was an opportunity lost. We had the team and we could have been kings of the city. However, we dropped the ball that game. That having been said the NFC Championship was the biggest win of my football career. It was amazing as we hosted the NFC Championship Trophy to the Chicago fans snow was falling to cap the perfect story!

**3) Critical Bench: Did it feel better to win the NFC Championship or did it hurt more to lose the Super Bowl?**

As an optimistic person it felt better to win the NFC Championship Game. I pretty much had to let the Super Bowl go. It was an amazing experience but nothing will ever come close to

winning that NFC Game in Chicago as the snow sprinkled down on soldier field! That was the epitome of my NFL career thus far. I hope to top it with a Super Bowl win as a Raven.

**4) Critical Bench: Brendon you have played for UCLA and in the Canadian League in the past. How is playing in the NFL different than playing college football and playing in the Canadian League? Is it sweeter winning in the NFL than in Divison 1 College Football, the CFL or in any other league that you have ever played for?**



The difference between the NFL and any other league is that the NFL is the biggest, baddest, fastest, most popular sport in America. Nothing compares to the NFL in the States. For me winning is winning. I compete in everything I do. I savor victory in the gym just as I do on the football field. The NFL is hard work and it's just that work! When you win on Sunday, it's no longer work. When you lose it becomes work. 9-5 grind like everyone else in America. We just get paid a lot more.

**5) Critical Bench: Tell us what NFL teams you have played for in the past! What was each experience like?**

I've been a bear, a dolphin, and now a Raven. Each team has its pros and cons. I'm glad to be a Raven now. I've always played their physical brand of football

**6) Critical Bench: Now that you're living your dream, is there anything in life better than playing in the NFL?**

There are tons of things in life better then playing in the NFL. Fortunately for me, I am living my dream and not too many people get to do that.

**7) Critical Bench: What is the worst and best part about playing in the NFL?**

The worst part about playing in the NFL is when people stereotype you. They assume you are arrogant or a jerk because you play in the NFL and they assume you make 3 million dollars a year which is not the case for the majority of NFL athletes.

The best part is helping people. When someone gets excited to meet or see you at a charity event. It's priceless to see a smile on a kids face. The NFL is magical in that way.



**8) Critical Bench: What do you like to do during the off season and during your time away from the NFL?**

I love going to the gym and getting on a bodybuilder program during the off season. My body usually recovers and gets 100% healthy a month after the season. I enjoy my free time with the family and feeling good while doing it is priceless!!!!

**9) Critical Bench: Give us your training routine! How do you train?**

I train like a bodybuilder! I do one body part per day in the off season. I hit it hard and I hit it fast. I usually do 5 movements 3 sets each. 45-60 minutes and I am done and pop a protein/recovery shake in immediately.

**10) Critical Bench: Does your training change during the NFL Season? How does your training change during the NFL season and during the rest of the year?**

Yes my training changes during the season. I cut down from 5 days of lifting a week and one body part per day, to 3 days a week and hitting 2 body parts per day. Monday's are chest and legs. Tuesdays are shoulders and back. Wednesdays are biceps and triceps. I need the rest of the days to recover and get ready for Sunday. I get a little smaller and leaner during the season, but my strength pretty much stays the same as long as I don't get dinged up. I also drop my movements from 5 movements per body part to only 3 movements. My muscle endurance goes down a lot but my initial strength stays good!

**11) Critical Bench: What's your diet like and what supplements do you like?**

I have a very simple diet. There are so many things I just don't eat because I am a picky eater. My staple foods are chicken, beef, rice, pasta, eggs, cheese, and [protein shakes](#). I am a sucker for a chocolate meal as well. I try to limit that to the weekends. Supplement wise I am big on [BSN](#) products. I love [nitrix](#) and [BSN Protein](#). Other products I use are [ZMA Twin Labs](#), [Joint fuel twin labs](#), [Omega 3, 6, 7](#), [CRE-ALKAYNE SCI FIT](#) and essential Enzymes. Passion 4 Life is another supplement I really love, [http://www. passion4lifevitamins. com/](http://www.passion4lifevitamins.com/) ! It's a non mainstream supplement but it does wonders on how I feel on a daily basis. The last supplement which is questionably my most important supplement is Life Wave Patches. I use these for recover, muscle building, anti aging, sleeping, and joint pain. They have a whole line of amazing product and they are all external. You don't have to ingest anything. [http://www. lifewave. com/](http://www.lifewave.com/)

**12) Critical Bench: What is life like between games every Sunday?**

Life between games is pretty focused. I spend the time with my family and prepare my mind and body to play each week. There is an occasional player night out. For example, all the linebackers will meet up for dinner and go out after, or have a poker night at a player's house.

**13) Critical Bench: Has there ever been a moment in the NFL that has changed you?**

Nothing in the NFL has changed me. Playing in the NFL just goes to show the ideas and dreams my parents have fostered in me are true. When you put your heart and soul into what ever you are doing, you will come out on top. Never give up and always chase your dreams.

**14) Critical Bench: What is your advice to others who would like to be an NFL athlete someday?**

Playing in the NFL is not always about talent. There are tons of talented enough people to play in the league but never make it because they lack work ethic, dedication, focus and discipline. "Hard work beats talent every time talent doesn't work hard!"

**15) Critical Bench: Brendon, it has been an honor talking to you today and giving us a glimpse of what it's like being an NFL Athlete. We wish you the best as a Raven and future as an NFL athlete! Is there anyone who you would like to thank?**

I would like to thank the fans for all their support and I would like to thank my family for teaching me never to give up and for always believing in me!

# POWERLIFTER BRIAN CARROLL

*Interviewed by Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com – January 2009*



Download This [Brian Carroll Desktop Wallpaper Here](#)

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Brian it's an honor to conduct this interview. I've seen you compete first hand a few times now and both times you had the highest total of the meet. Brian doesn't shy away from the competition. 2008 was a tremendous year for you. Could you break down your meets for us?

I am pretty happy with how this year went.

Jan- APF nc state meet 2458 @242 (1052 squat)  
feb- Orlando pro- am 2450 @242  
june - APF Seniors 2503 @242 (771 dead)  
june- Team Intramural meet 2535 @242(242 APF total record)  
aug- IPA pro- am 2570 @242(1050 squat and 785 bench)  
Nov- WPC World bench press champion @ 242(bombed in full meet)  
dec- APF Southern States 275 debut (4th 2500+ total in 6 months)

**CRITICAL BENCH:** How long have you been powerlifting? How did you first get started in the sport?

I did my first meet March of 03 and started training for it that January. I totaled 1752 @ 220 via 705, 424, 622. I had a friend tell me I was doing the meet, so I said ok and went and did it. Haha

**CRITICAL BENCH: That's the way to start, just dive right in. What weight classes and federations have you competed in? Have you always competed equipped?**

Mostly APF. I have done some WPO and one IPA meet. I have only competed in the 220, 242 and 275 pound weight classes. Yes my meets have always been geared. I have no desire to compete raw. The best competed geared, so that's where I choose to lift.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What is your favorite lift out of the three and why?**

For the longest time it was the squat. Now, I'm starting to really like benching. I have had my times of really liking the dead, but that just depends on how its moving at the time.



**CRITICAL BENCH: What was your all-time favorite moment so far in your powerlifting career?**

I would have to say my favorite was breaking the all time world record squat at the WPC worlds in 2006 with 1030 @ 220. I wanted to break it so bad for a while and was thrilled when I made it happen.

**CRITICAL BENCH: I can see that being a huge emotional high. Brian, every lifter is different when it comes to getting motivated for a big lift. What goes through your head moments before you step on to the platform?**

I just try to remember to keep my form and not get too crazy and screw the lift up.

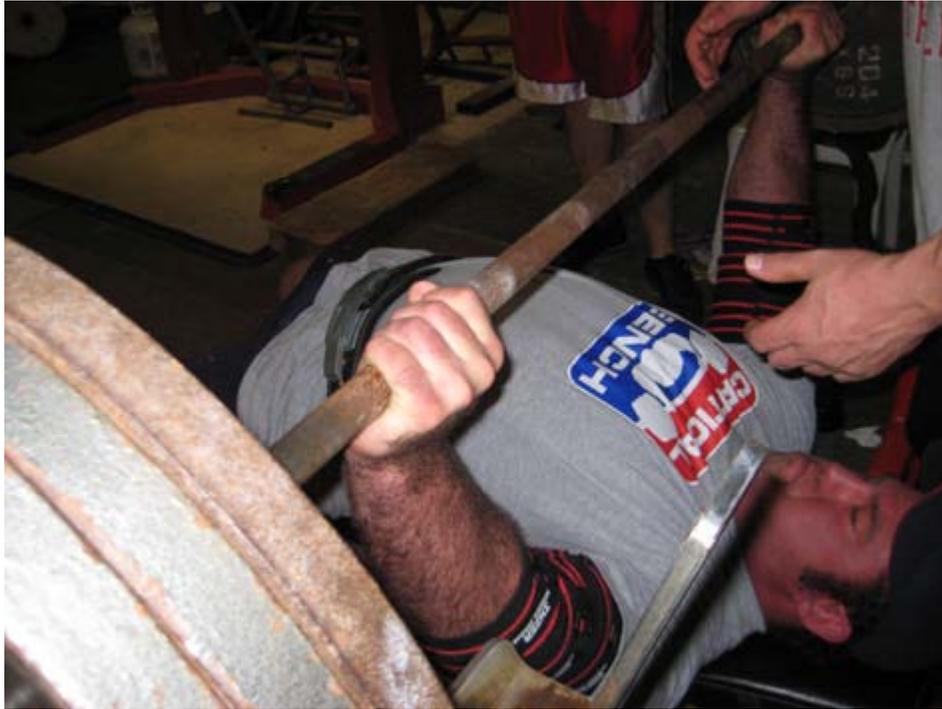
**CRITICAL BENCH: You train with Team Samson. Tell us about the atmosphere, what your teammates are like and what you've learned since you started training there. How did Team Samson Powerlifting start?**

It's a great atmosphere where we train! My teammates are great to me and we have a very friendly, anything goes atmosphere. We all give each other so much crap, but we are there to better each other and we know that.

TSP started at the middle of 03 with [Adam Driggers](#), [Tony Garland](#), Brandon Tripp, and Shane Shepard. I joined shortly after in October of 03 and we became an official team around the end of the year.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How important are your training partners? Could you have reached the level you are without them?**

They are very very important to me. I couldn't even be close to where I am without them. No I couldn't do it without them.



**CRITICAL BENCH: What does your training regiment consist of? Do you take any time off during the year? How many days a week do you train? All powerlifting or do you any bodybuilding exercises? Break it down for us, we're dieing to know!**

Typically I train four days a week I train bench on Mondays and upper back on Wednesday , Thursday I train light chest and shoulders, Friday I train the squat and dead. The Wednesday and Thursday training sessions are more body building exercises, while Monday and Friday are the heavy days. I like to take 2 heavy days then follow it with a light day, that way I don't beat myself up too much.

You can follow my training log in the Critical Bench [Muscle Forum](#). I keep a seperate log for each meet I enter to keep track of my own PRs and training.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What are your best lifts in competition and in the gym?**

Competition:1052 squat,733 bench and 771 dead.

Gym: 1100 squat, 750 bench and 800 dead.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Holy mackerel. You're the 2nd ranked 242er of all time when it comes to your total. How hungry are you for the #1 spot? Any other records you are proud of?**

I am very hungry for the #1 spot. I know that Greg and [Jim](#) are so tough and well rounded that I will have to be spot on to have a chance. I still have the WPC/APF world record for the 220 open squat, multiple junior world records in the WPC/APF and all of the Florida state records @ 242 except for the bench.



*Download This [Brian Carroll Desktop Wallpaper Here](#)*

**CRITICAL BENCH: Impressive. This is an interview by Critical Bench and we are talking to a 700 Pound + Bench Presser. What tips or advice can you give the readers to give their bench presses a boost?**

Train heavy and hard. Work every aspect of the lift. Off the chest, lockout etc. Keep plugging away, but at the same time, don't be scared to change things if they stop working. Don't be too cool to take advice from anybody, especially top and experienced lifters.

**CRITICAL BENCH: As a WPO competitor how do you feel about the USAPL taking over at the Arnold? What do you think is the biggest geared meet of the year that the best of the best compete at?**

I feel that the USAPL is boring and I wouldn't want to watch the meet at the Arnold. The pro-am is the biggest and baddest around right now and it is going to be awesome in august. Louie does an awesome job with it and that's why it's such a huge success.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Brian, use your crystal ball and look into the future 5-years from now. What is the all-time world record equipped and raw bench press?**

Geared:1150, raw: around the same.. and [Kennely](#) will have both.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What advice would you offer a young lifter wanting to get started in the sport that you wish you knew when you first started out?**

Listen to the guys who know their stuff. Listen, listen and listen more. I hate new guys that don't want to listen, but act like they want to get better or bitch about their lifts not being top level in just one year of lifting.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Powerlifting is still pretty much an underground sport. Do you like it this way or do you hope that one day its gets more exposure and becomes as popular as other extreme sports?**

I don't like it being so underground. I hope that one day it gets to be a popular extreme sport!!!! It is such a great hobby/sport and It's a shame its not more mainstream and popular.



**CRITICAL BENCH: If you could change one thing about the powerlifting community as a whole, what would it be?**

Less complaining and crap on the net.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What's your diet and nutrition regiment like? Do you take any supplements?**

I eat often and not so clean. I eat lots of chicken, rice potatoes, beef, sandwiches, burritos, pasta, dairy products, and protein shakes.

I also supplement with [Hypergain Creatine](#) and [Nitrogain](#). I have never had much success with a NO2 product or creatine, but my lifts are crazier than ever and I'm on both right now.

**CRITICAL BENCH: We all feel at home in the gym around our peers, but how do people react in the outside world when you tell them you squat over a grand and bench over 700? Is it even worth explaining about equipment to someone who doesn't know what it is?**

I honestly don't like to discuss much about my lifting with people outside powerlifting. Lots of reasons for my stand on that, but mainly because so many people lie about what they actually

can lift, so I don't want to sound like one of "those guys". I also don't like to sound like I'm bragging either. When they do hear what I lift, they do freak lol..



**CRITICAL BENCH: What do you like to do away from the gym for fun?**

I like to go to church, movies, go out to eat, go fishing and spend time with my friends and family.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Random question Brian. As a massage therapist what kind of person or physique do you hate massaging the most, you must have a funny story about this?**

boney. I have fat hands and its hard to work on somebody who is mostly bone. I think the funniest thing to ever happen to me while working is a male client kept telling me as I was working on his back that "Brian.. your arms are so trememdous"... lol It was strange!!

I really dislike massaging beautiful women. It's a horrible thing... Nah one that is hard to work on is really tiny women who are very

**CRITICAL BENCH: That's funny. What are your future goals Brian? Professionally, personally and in powerlifting.**

I'm single. I would like to have a family some time soon. I turn 27 this month, so im not so young anymore. I do like massage for a living, but Its hard on the body and I know I can't do it forever, so I need to find my niche soon and I'm sure I will. As far as powerlifing, I want to hold the top spot @ 242 and eventually @ 275 before I cant do this any longer..



**CRITICAL BENCH: I don't think anyone doubts you can achieve whatever you want. What has powerlifting taught you about yourself and life? What motivates you to compete, why do you do it?**

Powerlifting has taught me much humility and patience. It is a hard pill to swallow sometimes, especially when you train for a meet for 12 weeks and something doesn't go your way and you end up going home early after the squat.. I do it because I love it and want to be the best at it.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Good luck at your next meet! Represent Florida powerlifting and kick some butt. Anyone else you would like to thank or anything else you'd like to say?**

Thank you. I am ready for my next meet and we will be representing Florida for sure.

I would like to thank [Jesus](#) for keeping TSP safe all the years training and at the meets. I would like to thank John Inzer for all his help and gear. Inzer you are incredible. I would like to thank Critical Bench for all the help as well and I'm looking forward to working with Critical Bench in the future.

Thank you Adam, [Clint](#), Tony, Daniel, travis, tim, and all the rest of team Samson. Adam has always provided the best possible place to train and we are all forever grateful to him. Thank you Frankl, Rick Hussey and all of big iron for their help with the bench. Rob you have been a big help as well. Hook, Byrd and all my other very close friends I have made through powerlifing. Thank you Lester for all you have done too.

I wouldn't trade my last 5 years that I spent powerlifting and traveling for anything. Thank you to everyone who has supported or helped me at one time or another, whether it be a donation or a ride to or from the airport etc. Thank you so much!



# BENCH MONSTER JEREMY HOORNSTRA

*Interviewed by Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com –March 2008*



*Photo Courtesy of Hardcore Powerlifting*

For those of you that haven't heard of Jeremy Hoornstra I'd like to start this interview by asking you all a question. What rock have you been hiding under? Jeremy is a class act lifter and it's my pleasure to introduce him to those that haven't had a chance to follow his young lifting career.

After competing in various bodybuilding competitions, Jeremy turned to powerlifting while attending Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. After one year of entering the sport, he broke three national records and broke a world record in bench press at the age of 24. Competing in the 242 lb. weight class, Jeremy broke Mike MacDonald's longstanding Raw bench press record of 29 years with a 605 lb. Bench press at the New England Record Breakers Competition in Boston and increased that record to 615 lbs. at the 2006 Mr. Olympia Competition in Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as an unsanctioned 635 at the Arnold Pro Classic in the Animal Cage.

My name is Mike Westerdal and I met Jeremy for the first time at an APA meet in Florida where he volunteered to work as a spotter and loader. A couple months later I had the opportunity to see him hit a 650 raw bench press at the Tony Conyers meet in Tampa. We set up an interview shortly after the meet and would like to share it with you now as Jeremy continues his record-breaking crusade.

**Critical Bench: For those that haven't heard of you, if there are any, please give us a little background information about yourself.**



JH: I grew up in Leesburg Florida, which is just North of Orlando where I'm currently a firefighter like my father and grandfather were. I attended Florida State University and got a BS in Sociology with a minor in Political Science, and a BS in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences with a minor in Business Administration. I have always been competing in various sports, triathlons, mt. bike racing, swim team, football, but enjoyed lifting weights the most. I have pretty much always gone pretty heavy with it and my bench press has always been a little higher than normal.

I got into bodybuilding after high school with my roommate Brad Dunn and did a few shows including the Southern States and Southeastern

USA. Even though I dieted down hard for these, my strength stayed relatively high. When I moved to Tallahassee for school, I was just messing around on the bench and a few guys told me I had just done a world record and I should powerlift. Most people have told me that through the years but the image of the typical powerlifter wasn't as appealing to me as a bodybuilder. I did a little competition in Georgia and did pretty well and then the next competition I broke a world record for the 242 lb. weight class with 605 lbs. After that, I've been doing shows here and there, mainly the Olympia and Arnold with Animalpak and a few others as well. I'm training now with John Burkhead and we're working on getting our strength up to the next level.

**Critical Bench: Jeremy, you make it sound so easy. Have you always been super strong? How old were you when you started lifting?**

JH: I have always been a little stronger than average for my age. I started lifting in middle school at the fire station with my dad but I didn't compete until high school. On the high school weightlifting team, I went to state all four years mainly because of my bench. I was doing 405 for reps when I was 17 at about 170 lbs. The hard thing was getting everything else to the same level as my bench. Work in progress...



**Critical Bench: In the past you competed in bodybuilding and then moved on to powerlifting. What caused you to switch sports?**

JH: The main reason I switched was I stayed strong throughout the entirety of the diet. I would lose a little strength but within a week or two after the show, I was benching more than before the diet. Once I did it, I loved it. Seems like a friendlier environment than bodybuilding, at least at the amateur level, but you can blame 10 weeks of boiled chicken on that. I think that powerlifting is the only sport that a guy whose record you're about to break will be yelling at you to get it up and then shake your hand after. The sportsmanship is indescribable.

**Critical Bench: What federations have you competed in and why did you choose them?**

JH: I competed in the USPF in GA because it was close to FSU and because it was old school, which is what I was used to. I had never heard of a bench shirt or knee wraps. I had just gone in the gym and worked out as heavy as I could with good form and got stronger. I read up on USPF and thought it'd be a good federation to start in. After that, I did the NERB in Massachusetts, through the Atlantis Federation and the WPO at the Olympia.

**Critical Bench: How important are your training partners, do you think everyone needs them to break PRs? Where do you train and with who?**

JH: Not only is it important to have one, but to have one you trust. I wouldn't be able to go heavy without someone like that. I am really big on forced reps and drop sets, both of which require a trustworthy partner and you simply couldn't do them without them. I train at Xtreme Fitness in Leesburg with my old roommate Brad Dunn and [John Burkhead](#). Brad is a professional strongman and John is a master's world record holder as well. We also train a few times a week with a few other pro strongmen like Brian Turner from Scotland and "Shrek".

**Critical Bench: Speaking of PRs, how did it feel when you broke Mike McDonald's 29-year old world record in the 242s with a 605 pound bench press at the NERB competition?**

JH: To be honest, it felt great. The record was almost 30 years old and no one had really come close to it. McDonald is one of the best lifters of all time and it was a huge honor to be next to him in that weight class.

**Critical Bench: Tell us about your new training footage DVD entitled [242 RAW](#).**

JH: Well it's called "242 Raw" and is a training video leading up to the NERB, Mr. Olympia, and Arnold Pro Classic in the Animalcage along with footage from each. It has basic training exercises I do weekly, but mainly the heavy sets. There is a 675 flat bench, 605 incline, 365 hang-clean, nosebreakers with 315, military presses with 455 and some other extreme lifts. The dvd is for sale now at [www.criticalbench.com](http://www.criticalbench.com).

**Critical Bench: I saw you hit 650 at the Tony Conyers meet here in Tampa this August. You're creeping up on the all-time raw record. Is breaking the all-time record your ultimate goal?**

JH: Yes, as of now, I'm shooting for within two years. Before I do that, I want to bump the 242 record up to at least 675 or so and then maybe go up to the 275 pound weight class and go for the all-time. I might stay in the 242's for it but that just means more cardio. I don't like to drop weight before a competition. If I weigh in at 240, I compete at 240.

**Critical Bench: Would you ever consider competing with gear as a change of pace?**





JH: I've considered it but my strength as of now is in raw. I have a few shirts from Titan I've been messing around with but it always seems like there is a competition I have to guest lift at and I concentrate on my raw. I have always trained raw and that is what I like, but you don't typically like something you're not good at, so maybe one day I'll actually stop being lazy and work on geared...we'll see.

**Critical Bench: What kind of a strength training routine do you use to build such a strong bench?**

JH: I pyramid and then go to heavy max, forced reps, and drop sets. Other than that, I do all the power movements. I train like a typical bodybuilder, bodypart/day. However, I focus hugely on my lats, shoulders, and tri's, which are all really important in gaining weight in your bench press. Five muscles all working together will lift more than one.

**Critical Bench: Do you use the same routine all year round or do you have an off-season program?**

JH: I switch it up but only every now and then. I've always trained the same but I'm about to start a new program that is the basic 10 week rotation where you do sets of 10 with 50% of your max, then the next week sets of 8 with 60%, etc. We'll see how it goes.

**Critical Bench: Have you had any injuries during your powerlifting journey? How do you deal with injury?**

JH: I've actually never really had an injury. Everyone has little ones like strains, etc. but I don't push them and so far, I've been lucky. Listen to your body, if it says stop, then stop.

**Critical Bench: In some of the pictures it looks like you have a close grip on the bench. Is your close grip bench almost as strong as your regular bench?**

JH: Almost but not quite. I'm getting right at 635 or so for closegrip where I'm getting just over 700 with my regular. They're not far off but just the different muscle groups kicking in will make all the difference. I'm closer than most on bench but I'm paranoid about being one of those old guys that says, "I used to bench that much, until I blew out my shoulder." Plus I've always had stronger tri's so it's working out.



**Critical Bench: What kind of supplements do you take?**

JH: The main supplements I take are [creatine](#), [glutamine](#), [glucosamine](#), [protein](#), and a pre-workout energy like redline or animal pump. Boss makes a ton of RTD's and I down them like crazy.

**Critical Bench: What's more important training, nutrition, sleep or supplements?**

JH: All are important, but if I had to choose, I'd say sleep. You rest when you grow, not when you work out. No sleep, no growth no matter how hard you hit the gym that day or how many chicken breasts you ate. However, like I said they are all really important and the key to getting stronger is to have the right balance of all four.

**Critical Bench: There have only been a couple dozen lifters in history that have raw benched more than 600 pounds. If a lifter had a five hundred pound press, what advice could you give them to try to reach a 600+?**

- JH: 1. Go heavy, do forced reps and drop sets.
2. Keep going, be persistent. No one benches 600 lbs in a couple hard years of training. It takes time.
3. Eat more, no one eats enough (that doesn't mean eat more crap).
4. Change it up. Shock your body into growing.

**Critical Bench: Last time I talked to you, you were still getting adjusted to the schedule at the Fire House. How's the new job treating you?**



JH: The new job is awesome, great career. It's tiring and sometimes you have long days and nights but the calls are intense and extremely high pace and just keeping up with everything is really fun. It did take some getting used to the hours, right now 24 on, 48 off (maybe 48 on, 96 off soon), as opposed to working four hours a night bouncing at college, three times a week. I'm up before the sun two out of three days, up all night, etc. It's rough but I'm getting used to it.

**Critical Bench: Yup unfortunately you can't stay in college forever. If you were to predict the future of bench pressing how would you picture it 10-years from now?**

JH: I don't know where the shirts are going and I honestly don't know enough about them to even guess. However, the raw bench press I think will gain bigger respect and I see the record being bumped up to at least 750 or so, hopefully by me but Nick Winters is gaining on it fast. We'll see how high the record will go.

**Critical Bench: Thanks for the interview Jeremy. Good luck on and off the platform, we'll be keeping a close eye on you!**

# AMERICAN GLADIATOR DON YATES

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –April 2008*

**1) CRITICAL BENCH: It is Ben Tatar from Critical Bench and I am here with Don "Hollywood" Yates AKA Wolf of the hit TV Show American Gladiators! Wolf, it is great to have you here with Critical Bench today. I think everyone knows who you are, but humor us and introduce yourself to the Critical Bench readers.**

Wolf: I am a professional athlete who has played about every sport. I'm an Entertainer. I've been singing since I was 7 and entertaining in clubs. And now I am of course one of the top American Gladiators.

**2) CRITICAL BENCH: What was the Wolf like before he was a pro athlete and an entertainer? What type of kid were you?**

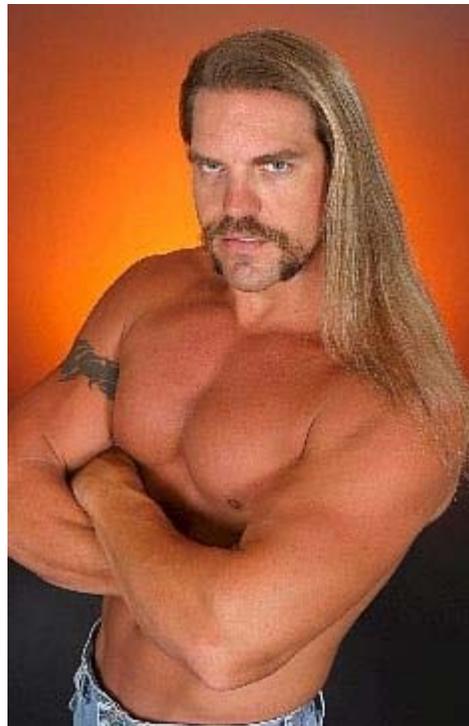
Wolf: I was kind of a rough neck kid. I grew up outside and didn't spend a lot of time indoors watching TV or anything like that. I was always outside climbing trees and buildings and running all over the city on my bike. I played football, baseball, basketball, soccer, and about every sport there is. I grew up as an athlete and in my Grandfathers nightclubs and on horse tracks. I had a very well rounded childhood that taught me a lot of things about life.

**3) CRITICAL BENCH: What adversities did you have to overcome as a child and as an adult?**

Wolf: As a child, I was actually a smaller kid, short and thin. Being one of the smaller kids on the block at that time, I had to constantly prove myself. I was always getting in fights with kids 3 or 4 years older than me and beating them up to prove that size didn't matter, it was in the heart. After high school I started growing so it all came about afterwards. I also had my first knee surgery at age 16.

Further on in life, throughout rodeo and bullfighting, I've had over 130 broken bones, 3 knee surgeries, and I was also gored by a bull and they had to do emergency surgery to save my life. I had to heal through that and go back to fighting bulls. And actually, a year to the day of being in the hospital was when I was asked to be an American Gladiator, so I went from my death to being a Gladiator in a year.

**4) CRITICAL BENCH: You are one of the mentally strongest men on the planet! Wolf, how did you get involved with the WWE? Tell us about your WWE experience! What was it like working for them?**



Wolf: When I turned 30, I decided I wanted to be a professional wrestler. I started training with Steve Islas and then began doing independent shows. About a year after training I was being booked to do dark matches for the WWE, which are the opening matches to get the crowd warmed up. Then I also did a couple spots on Velocity and Raw. But I wasn't under contract, I was just an extra guy that they would use here and there. It was a rough business being on the independent scene, traveling, not getting paid a lot of money, and constantly beating up my body. It did teach me a lot about character development and helped me as an American Gladiator, allowing me to be able to "POP" in the first season.



**5) CRITICAL BENCH: How did your journey becoming a Gladiator get started?**

Wolf: I was in Las Vegas at the Mr. and Mrs. [Olympia Bodybuilding Event](#) and was walking through the pit expo when a casting director saw me and asked me to try out for American Gladiators. They told me that I had the look that they wanted, but at the time I actually told them no because I was waiting on a contract from the WWE. But after a couple of days of them continually asking me to try out, I went ahead and did it. Even throughout the first few weeks, I kept telling them that I would do all of this but I would probably be getting a contract soon, so I wasn't really taking things seriously. Then things with the WWE weren't making much progress so I finally decided that if they weren't going to grab me then I was going to try the Gladiators so I started taking things more seriously and luckily I did because now I'm a Number 1 guy on a Number 1 show on NBC.

**6) CRITICAL BENCH: You definitely are to Gladiators what Hulk Hogan was to wrestling back when he put it on the map! Wolf, what is it like working with the people you work with on Gladiators and what are some of your favorite Gladiator events?**

Wolf: It has been an awesome experience being on Gladiators and being around the same people, because it's like having a new family. It's a lot of fun to go to work every day and be around people you like. I love the physical aspect of being an athlete and competing and the events like the Pyramid and Power Ball where I get to hurt someone and put a hit on them. And I also like the cerebral aspects of other events, being able to destroy people mentally.

**7) CRITICAL BENCH: How has being on Gladiators changed your life?**

Wolf: Being a Gladiator has changed my life because there is more recognition now. More people know who I am. I did have some recognition through bullfighting in the rodeo circuit, but it has escalated. I will walk by bars and people will howl at me, or I will be in the airport and people will do the same, so that is very cool. The biggest change for me though has been that I

am constantly gone from home. With rodeo, I was gone too but with Gladiators, I'm gone 2 months at a time, taping the show, and then flying from New York to LA to Nashville to try and promote. So I don't get as much time to spend at home with my wife and my animals, which makes it a little hard.

**8) CRITICAL BENCH: You definitely have a larger than life persona! Even in everyday discussion people are talking about "The Wolf" from American Gladiators! How did you get the name Wolf?**

Wolf: The producers were watching me in training, trying to decide what to call me, and they came up with some stupid names at first that were just too one-dimensional and didn't have a lot of character to them. So we kept thinking and I actually went home for a few days. When I came back I had come up with the idea of Wolf, But before I even got to tell them, they had come to me and told me that I looked like a wolf, and the way I attacked people was like a wolf, so they thought "Wolf" was perfect. I knew that it was perfect because that was exactly what I was going to suggest.

**9) CRITICAL BENCH: What experience was more intense Rodeo Bullfighting or being on Gladiators? How are the experiences different?**

Wolf: Rodeo bullfighting was much more intense because it is more of a life and death sport. With bullfighting, I'm going up against a 2,000 pound animal who's main goal in life is to hurt somebody, so there was the risk of death every single time I stepped into an arena. It was much tougher and more intense. With American Gladiators, I'm only going up against other men, and after fighting bulls for all those years, I haven't run across a man that has scared me too much. I have fought some of the meanest animals in the world and I'm still here, so a man isn't going to do anything to me. Gladiators is a lot of fun with all of the events being so thrilling and exciting, but as far as intensity, bullfighting is much more intense.

**10) CRITICAL BENCH: So far in your hardcore athletic journey what has been.....**

**Your most hardcore moment-**

Wolf: It would probably be the day I was gored by a bull and had its horn 9 inches to me, almost killing me. It was such a serious injury and happened so quickly though that it didn't seem so hard core at the time. I've had other times where a bull has had me against the fence, trying to mash me into the dirt, and even times where they have hooked me all over the arena. I had one hit me in the head above the ear and almost ripped my ear off. So I've had a lot of moments that have been intense and brutal, but the goring was the more serious situation.

**Your funniest moment-**

Wolf: There has been so many where it was both hardcore and funny at the same time, but there was a time when a bull had bucked the rider off so I was trying to distract it, and they accidentally let another bull out at the same time. I had my back to him as he came running behind me, and I just caught sight of him at the last moment with enough time to jump straight into the air so he ran under me. Everyone was laughing at the time, but IF it happened to be a second later, I could have been a more serious situation.

**Your favorite moment-**



Wolf: Probably the first time I won the Salinas, California Bull Fighting Championship. The Sparks brothers were there and some of the best bullfighters in the world, but I went in and won 4 out of 4 rounds and won the championship and the buckle. That Championship is the largest in the world, so it was a great experience - even better than going to national finals.

**The moment that changed you the most-**

Wolf: I would say being gored by the bull, because I wasn't sure if I would ever be able to be a physical athlete again and do anything like fighting bulls or wrestling. So while I was laying in the hospital stapled up with tubes in me, I had to start thinking of other ways I could make a good living and still be an entertainer. I tried to learn about writing comedies and focused on what I could do to be a better actor. I also focused on songwriting. It made me focus on something else besides fighting bulls.

**11) CRITICAL BENCH: What are your future goals?**

Wolf: Hopefully to keep American Gladiators going, doing my part to keep them at the Number 1 spot on NBC and to try and stay doing this as long as possible. Also, I would like to start getting some major roles in motion pictures and work on becoming one of the top actors in the country. I would like to possibly win an Oscar or an Emmy. I would also like to work on my music and put an album out within the next year or two and try to win some awards there. I just want to continue with entertainment and expand as much as I can. I enjoy entertaining people so I want to become the best I can in the industry.

**12) CRITICAL BENCH: Does your wife and family support you? What do they think about you being a Gladiator?**

Wolf: My wife and family support me in everything I do, no matter what, because they know that anything I put my mind to, I'll become a success at it. They all love American Gladiators and they love watching me on TV every week, getting to see me having fun and enjoying life.

**13) CRITICAL BENCH: What have been some of the biggest fan reactions that you have gotten before?**

Wolf: Some of the biggest fan reactions have been, like I said, just walking through airports or down the street and having fans howl at me from all over the place. The other day I went to the track to run with Beaux Greer, an Olympian Javelin thrower, and as we were walking through the meet that was going on, everyone was howling at me and coming up to me wanting pictures

and autographs. They of course recognized Beaux as well because he is one of the top track and field stars. It is just very cool that fans go out of their way to meet me and ask for pictures and autographs. It's great to know that people appreciate me and what I do.

**14) CRITICAL BENCH: That's great that you appreciate your fans as well. Wolf, you have great athletic ability and you're built like a super hero. Give us your weight training routine!**

Wolf: I try to get up in the morning and do cardio on an empty stomach, just to try and keep the fat burned off of me. Then I will go back later in the day and I'll usually work 2 body parts a day. I split it up differently all the time and constantly change my routine so that my muscles and body don't get too used to a certain routine. Lately I have been working my legs twice a week to try and get them to grow more.

I go heavy lifting and I go anywhere from 8-15 reps. If I get more than 15 reps then I'll add more weight, and if I'm barely getting 10, I'll stay there and try to get more. I just try to go heavy for more reps, I don't do heavy low reps or light with a lot of reps. I always want to push harder.

**15) CRITICAL BENCH: Tell us about your diet and what supplements do you take?**

Wolf: I try to eat somewhere around 3,500 calories a day. I eat mostly protein and clean carbs. I don't eliminate carbs entirely, I just eat the clean ones like oatmeal and veggies, and I love sweet potatoes. For high protein, I will eat chicken, fish, steak, and lots of egg whites. My first two meals are usually 6 egg whites, a cup of oatmeal, a protein shake, and yogurt.

Later on I may have something like chicken and rice with broccoli, or a steak with sweet potatoes. I have almost the same meals every day, just trying to stick to high protein and clean carbs. I usually have 2 protein drinks a day and drink 1-2 gallons of water.

Supplement wise, I use a lot of [BSN products like Nitrix and Cell Mass powder drink](#). Pre-workout, I also like [No-Explode](#). I also take [multivitamins](#), but basically my core is my BSN products for supplements.

**16) CRITICAL BENCH: What is your advice for a kid who would one day like to be a crazy WWE wrestler or a Gladiator?**

Wolf: My advice would be to eat healthy get in the gym and work out hard. And if you're not seeing gains then you should up your food intake and change your training program. It would also be smart to get someone that knows what they're doing and can help you out with your training and diet. Then: Study. Study tapes, and get character development. The WWE and American Gladiators is about having a character and a personality that is larger than life. If you don't have a character, you won't get hired.

**17) CRITICAL BENCH: Wolf, is living the life that you now live the same as you once upon a time dreamed of it to be?**

Wolf: Living the life that I live is definitely the same I once dreamed of it to be. From the time I was 7, I wanted to be famous and wanted people to know who I was. I wanted money and all the toys like cars and motorcycles and jet skis and boats. I wanted to be able to afford everything and be in magazines and on TV. Some people want to just be rich and are content

with just the money, but I always wanted to have money and be famous and have a good family at the same time. I want it ALL. I have everything right now because I have a great life with toys and cars and great animals and a great wife. I'm living the dream.



**18) CRITICAL BENCH: Before you compete in a Gladiator event what is going through your mind?**

Wolf: To win and to do the best I can with my abilities and beat the contender in the game. I want to beat them down both physically and mentally so that when I come up against them again, I've already gotten the mental part done. If I've already beat them in their mind, it's easier the second time around. On top of that, I'm also trying to think of keeping my personality going and trying to come up with one-liners to throw out so that it is good TV. I want to keep the producers and the directors happy and of course it makes for a better show for the fans to enjoy as well.

**19) CRITICAL BENCH: What makes the Wolf different from everyone else?**

Wolf: Everyone else is just mere mortal humans. The Wolf is a creature. He is truly like a werewolf, part man and part animal. He is a creature with no real boundaries. I can do and say whatever I want and get away with it. Other people have to live within a realm with a certain set of rules. With me, there are no rules. There are no limits or boundaries and there is nothing that I can't do. If you try to constrain me, I'm going to be even more vicious and brutal than I've been in the past.

**20) CRITICAL BENCH: Wolf, if you could Main Event at Wrestle Mania against any 3 wrestlers or people in this world who would you choose and why?**

Wolf: That's tough because there are so many great wrestlers that I would love to wrestle. Hulk Hogan and Rick Flair of course come to mind as great guys. Also some of the newer guys like John Cena and Dave Batista. So many of them could have great matches and put on a great show.

As far as people in general, maybe President Bush, because then I could beat him down for all the extra money I have to put down for fuel costs.

Heck, throw me in the ring with Tyson, THEN throw me in the ring with all of the WWE Divas.

**21) CRITICAL BENCH: Hahahaha! I think we'd all love to see that! Away from being a Gladiator, what does the Wolf like to do during his free time?**

Wolf: I just like to chill. I like to relax and go to the beach or the lake and sit in the sun and get a tan. I love going to the gym too, but more than anything I just like to chill. Everything is always so intense with me and when I'm performing and competing, I exert so much energy and adrenaline, that it's almost a 180. I don't want to do anything after that but relax and watch TV or hang out. I am a very extreme person. I am extremely mellow, or extremely amped.



**22) CRITICAL BENCH: Do you have any creeds that you live by or any favorite quotes?**

Wolf: One creed that I live by is to "Believe in Dreams". I have had a lot of them and I have lived them. One of my dreams was to become one of the best bullfighters in the country, and I've done that. Another was to become a professional wrestler and wrestle with the WWE, and I've done that. Then it was to be a Gladiator and be on TV and in Magazines, and I'm doing that. I believe that if you work hard enough, you can do anything you want.

I also heard a quote in a movie once that helped me through bullfighting and then life itself. It was: "Fear causes hesitation and hesitation causes your worst fears to come true." I use this in every day life because I don't worry about things or be afraid that I can't accomplish something. I just put my mind to it and do it. I don't let fear rule my world. I've wiped fear out of my vocabulary, heart, and mind.

**23) CRITICAL BENCH: Wolf: Great words of wisdom. When your career is all said and done, how do you want to be remembered?**

Wolf: I want to be remembered as the greatest entertainer that there ever was.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Wolf, it has been a pleasure talking to you today! What a freakin entertainment athletic freak show you have been and we all just can't wait to see more! In closing is there anyone who you would like to thank?**

Wolf: I would like to thank my mother for giving me good values and letting me know that I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. I would like to thank my grandfather for showing me the drive and what it takes to be a real man. And I would also like to thank my wife for sticking with me every time I change my mind on what form of entertainment I want to do, and sticking by me when I'm gone on the road so much. I want to thank her for being the greatest wife a man has ever had. She is an incredible woman and has stuck with me through everything.

**THANKS CRITICAL BENCH!**

# UFC GREAT JEFF "THE SNOWMAN" MONSON

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –May 2008*



Jeff Monson is a well known UFC fighter. He has demolished his opponents one by one and he has even appeared in UFC main event cards.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** It's Ben Tatar from Critical Bench and today I am here with UFC great, Jeff Monson! Jeff, we all know you are a top notch UFC fighter, but give us a quick introduction about yourself!

Jeff Monson: My name is Jeff Monson. I am 37 yrs old and from Olympia, WA. My height is 5ft 9inches and I weigh 245lbs.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** When did you get started in the MMA?

Jeff Monson: I got started in 1998 when I moved back to Olympia after getting my masters in psychology from Minnesota, Duluth. I was a mental health professional in Olympia and worked as well doing private counseling for kids and families. I started at AMC with Matt Hume.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** That is an interesting transition. You were a mental health professional and then a full contact fighting professional, very interesting combination! Jeff tell us about your fighting philosophy!

Jeff Monson: I try to remain calm and true to my strengths during preparation and the fight itself



**CRITICAL BENCH: So far in a fight, what has been your funniest moment?**

Jeff Monson: Crapping my shorts in a fight, although it wasn't that funny at the moment.

**CRITICAL BENCH: hahahaha! That could be another fighting weapon, lol! Jeff, what has been your best UFC moments?**

Jeff Monson: My best moments are submissions usually with some kind of choke

**CRITICAL BENCH: Jeff, have there been any moments in your fighting career that have really changed you? What moment has changed you the most?**

Jeff Monson: Losing to Ricco Rodriguez made me realize I wasn't as good as I thought. I needed to get with a team and American top team made that reality for me.

**CRITICAL BENCH: A lot of people would like to be more hardcore and gutsy like you. What is your advice for the sissies of the world and how to make fearful people brave?**

Jeff Monson: There comes times in everyone's life where they need to make a decision to be more than they think they can. You have to take and cherish these moments as they will change your life forever.

**CRITICAL BENCH: That is powerful! Jeff, tell us about some of the things you have done in fighting that you are proud of!**

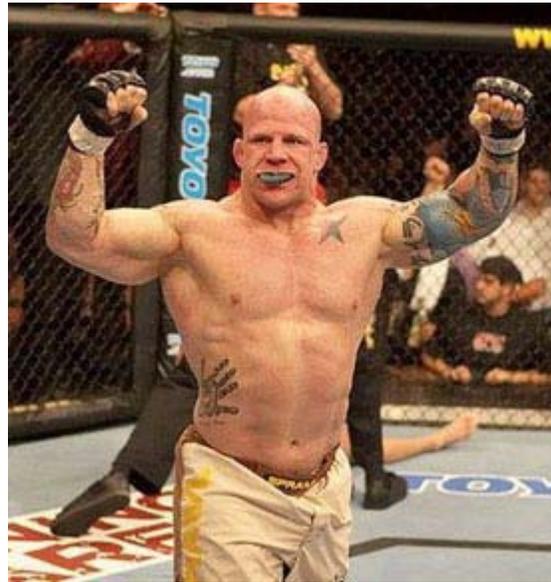
Jeff Monson: I train and fight to win. I am never satisfied with my performance regardless of the outcome. I always want to be better.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Very interesting perspective! The perspective to be the BEST! Jeff, tell us about your workout routine, diet, and supplements? How do you train to be a fighter?

Jeff Monson: I lift and run hills for conditioning. I do a lot of grappling and boxing. I avoid sugar and processed foods. For supplements I take cod liver oil and [whey protein](#).

**CRITICAL BENCH:** What are the best and worst things about being a fighter?

Jeff Monson: I get to do what I love to do. I am able to travel and meet a lot of people. However, I am always in physical pain and can't do activities I enjoy sometimes.



**CRITICAL BENCH:** Jeff, how much do you bench press?

Jeff Monson: I have no idea anymore, as I can't really flat bench with a straight bar due to my shoulder. I do dumbbells quite heavy though.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Jeff, what is the best advice you were ever told and what was the worst?

Jeff Monson: Learn how to box was the best. The worst I think was to take juice when I was young.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** What injuries have you had to experience before and what adversities have you had to overcome? How did you make it through them and what is your advice for anyone going through a physical or emotional traumatic event right now?

Jeff Monson: I've both biceps completely torn and surgeries to repair them. I've had a knee surgery and get cortisone shots in my shoulder and hip periodically. Everything has costs, you need to decide for yourself what matters to you and follow through with achieving your best results despite the adversities. It's the key to happiness for me.

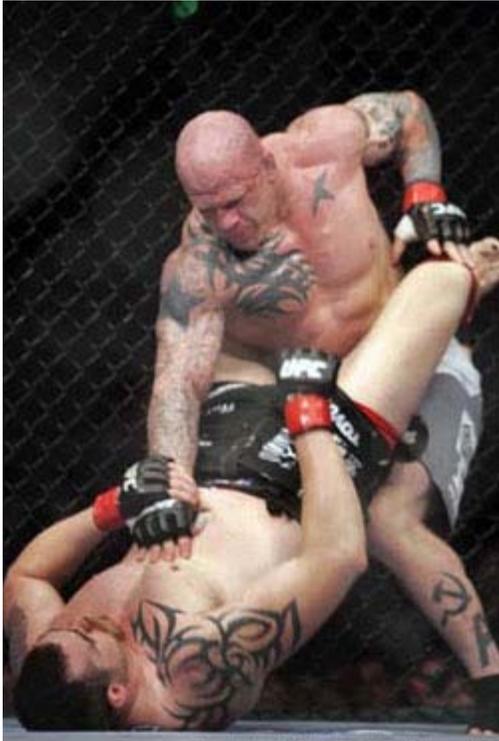
**CRITICAL BENCH:** What are your future goals?

Jeff Monson: To win the world grappling title again and have a shot at the UFC title once more.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** It would be great to see Jeff Monson versus Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira or whoever the UFC champ is at the time for the UFC world heavy weight championship! Jeff, how do you see the future of MMA?

Jeff Monson: It is getting huge now. People see it as a legitimate sport now. As long as it stays clear of the corruption that has plagued boxing, then the sky is the limit.

**CRITICAL BENCH: If you could fight at Wrestle Mania and challenge 3 people, in a full contact fight who would you choose and why?**



Chronicle / Christina Koci Hernandez

Jeff Monson: McCain, Obama, and Hillary Clinton because hopefully the people would realize we can do just fine without anyone in charge of us.

**CRITICAL BENCH: That would be the biggest Wrestle Mania ever!! Jeff Monson taking out the political system what a change in time it would be!! Jeff can you tell us what the tattoos on your body mean?**

Jeff Monson: The Tattoos on my body are anarchy symbols. We need real freedom and don't need anyone in charge of us.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Jeff, away from fighting what do you enjoy doing?**

Jeff Monson: Spending time with my kids, traveling, and speaking out against injustice.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Do you have any sponsors? Tell us about them!**

Jeff Monson: onthemat, headblade, dahui, scrapwear, gameness. All these sponsors have been good to me and I personally know the guys running the company.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What does your family think about you fighting?**

Jeff Monson: Supporting me with it. My kids hate it because they know it means I am away from them training. Their friends take more of an interest in my career than they do but I don't mind it that way.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What is your advice for someone who would like to be a fighter?**

Jeff Monson: Have a background in some martial art or wrestling before diving headfirst into mma. You see a lot of young guys who want to fight right away but they don't have a background in any one discipline and when they reach a higher level it becomes difficult to compete.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Jeff, when your fighting career is all said and done how you do want to be remembered?**

Jeff Monson: A champion.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Jeff, you keep getting closer to how you want to be remembered. How have you changed in the last 5 years as a fighter?**

Jeff Monson: I have focused on improving my weaknesses and faced the truth I needed to do this to become as good as I could.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What makes Jeff different from everyone else?**

Jeff Monson: We are all different and that is a good thing. I embrace people's differences. I don't think I am better than anyone else.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Great answer. When you don't think you are better or worse than anyone, is one of the big keys to BALANCE. Jeff, do you have a message to everyone out there?**

Jeff Monson: To those who aren't afraid to be heard; they give my inspiration

**CRITICAL BENCH: Jeff, it has been great talking to you today. It has been fun watching you destroy your opponents out there and making an impact on the sport of fighting. Jeff, here at Critical Bench we wish you the best with everything you do!**

Jeff Monson: Thank you and I appreciate the support.

# HYBRID ATHLETE CHRISTI WITMER

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –April 2009*

**Bencher, Bodybuilder, Strongwoman & Figure Competitor**



**CRITICAL BENCH:** Christi, we talked to you a long time ago and your interview pictures were from 1999. Although, you were successful, much has changed since then. What has gone on with you and your training since we have last interviewed you?

Wow! Has it been that long? A lot has happened since then. I have continued to compete in Bench Press competitions reaching my highest bench of 380 lbs so far. Along with benching I have been successful in bodybuilding winning an overall, capturing the Florida Strongwoman title and winning in figure competitions. Mike and I now have a wonderful little boy named Ryan.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** I find it very impressive that you can enter powerlifting, bodybuilding, figure, strongman and succeed in all of those sports. After making many different achievements you have been sponsored by Bud Lyte from BMF Sports. What was that like for you?

I'm thrilled to death! I have been competitive in benching, strongman, bodybuilding and now figure for the last 9 years and it is nice that people like [Shawn Lyte](#) come along and "pat" you on

the back and tell you "good job" with a sponsorship. For all the blood, sweat and tears that we as competitors have put into our sports that we are passionate about. I would like to thank BMF Sports for the chance to represent them in my competitions.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi lets break your accomplishments down one by one for a minute. First, tell us about bench pressing 380lbs. Where did you achieve this bench and what was it like? How did you celebrate?**

I hit the 380 lbs bench in the APF at Boca Raton, Florida. I was so excited! I really didn't know if it was even going to happen... I hadn't been able to hit one rep on the bench for about 4 weeks before... My shoulder was really bad, to the point that I had 2 cortisone shots in them already. I would just "handle" the weight the best I could every Saturday and hope that I

could compete at the upcoming meet. I really wanted to hit a bigger number! I knew I was good for it if my shoulders would let me. Everyone was holding their breath for me. It felt so awesome when I did hit my bench and it was sooo easy... never any hesitation! However, unfortunately it was my last bench. My shoulder was shot after that. I play around with the benching now but I really can't go to heavy any longer... 225 lbs is as heavy as I go.



**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, in Bodybuilding you won an overall? What was that like and how did you celebrate?**

I really had a great time doing this show. Winning is always fantastic! The best way to celebrate after a bodybuilding show is to EAT.... And that is just what I did! Mike and I met up with a few power lifting buddies at a Steak house. The best part was the dessert!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Then in strongwoman, you captured the Florida Strongwoman title. What events did you do well at that day and how did you celebrate?**

I laugh about this title. I was in the middle of dieting for my first figure show and was about 4 weeks out. We were going to watch the strongman show and support a few competitors. I had no intention of entering until about 1 or 2 days before. In fact I have never even considered really doing a strongman show. So I had never played with the implements. And to top it off I was carb cycling and I had been on low carbs for about 4 days! It just sounded like fun and the weights of the events were something I thought that I could handle. I just wanted to try it. We had a 360lbs tire to pull, 110lb incline log press, 185lb keg load, farmer walk dead lift for reps (something like 160 per hand) and the 360lb tire flip. There were girls from all over Florida present.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How did you do in figure competitions and what was the experience like? Christi, how is figure like compared to hardcore bodybuilding, power lifting and strongman for you?**

Figure has been the toughest for me. I have had to really work at not posing too "large" . After bodybuilding it was difficult to not show off muscle. I just had to learn to stand there and not flex. My first show I placed 6th in the open class. Afterward I spoke to the judges and was told that I stood too "LARGE". So, I took their advice and entered another show 2 weeks later, and came home winning my open tall class.



**CRITICAL BENCH: You have achieved so much in many different aspects of the iron game, all in one person- like an iron dream. What is next for you?**

I plan on competing in figure, strongman and would love to try my hand in a Highlands Game! I also am going to try and qualify for Nationals later this year.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, having experience in both worlds, how is the power lifting scene different than the body building scene? How would you compare and contrast the worlds as you have done both?**

I believe that power lifting is full of a "put up or shut up" attitude. There aren't as many glares and the cattiness in it as there is in the bodybuilding world. Both take extreme dedication to be at the top! I love the look of bodybuilding but my heart will always be with power lifting.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, one of the reasons why you are super strong is that you married Mike Witmer who is one of the most old school and hardcore strength athletes who I have ever met and I met hundreds of iron freaks in this industry. Please, tell us about how Mike has helped you get stronger.**

My husband has always gone above and beyond to help me with anything that I have ever set my mind to. From power lifting to figure. He not only pushes me past any limits that I could have ever imagined for myself, but he has been there for my meltdowns while dieting to pick me back up and give me the motivation that I needed to hear to get focused once more. He many times has set his lifts on the back burner just to assure mine. You ask how he has made me stronger.....he has taught me how to be a champion. Mentally and physically!

**CRITICAL BENCH: How did you and Mike meet?**

Mike and I actually went to high school together, but we met again in the gym years later. I was just on the quest to lose weight and get back into shape. When I met Mike he was training for a bodybuilding show. I was interested in fitness competitions at the time but wasn't sure about how to go about getting into them. He offered to personally train me and head me in that direction. We began training together and we jelled together as training partners.



**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, explain what each experience is like for you mentally?**

- Guys who try to impress you and out lift you. Then they away run after you show them that you can out lift them. This has always tickled me. I might wear pink but I NEVER LIFT LIKE A GIRL! I enjoy being strong.
- Being on a bodybuilding stage. I love bodybuilding and figure. Figure has become my favorite because of the muscle elegance that it shows! I just love the look of the pro figure girls! It's awesome to be strong and have the figure look!
- Being on a power lifting platform. Nothing compares to the rush of the lifts!
- Being screwed. NO one likes the idea that someone received something that they feel entitled to. This is what you know can happen anytime you step in to a judged event. Know it and accept that it will sooner or later happen to you. I don't like it. BUT, I just live to fight another day and let it drive me! It definitely makes me trainer hard!
- Winning a championship. CLOUD 9!!! Should sum it up! It is wonderful to know that all the time and stress I put myself under everyday and every workout has paid off!

The ride. I wouldn't want to miss any part of the ride. It's nice to be out of the norm. The thing about power lifting and figure is that no matter which one I'm competing in, I always get the same reaction from society, shock or amazement. Whether I'm lifting more than they can imagine or having the body that they say that could never get. It is what separates us from the rest of the world!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What makes Christi different from everyone else?**

What you see is what you get with me. I don't pull punches. I don't try to be something I'm not. I work hard to achieve what I want. And I do what it takes to get me there. I'm not afraid to take a

step in a different direction if I feel like I have achieved everything that is within my grasp in that field! I wouldn't change anything about me!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, what are your thoughts on the following people:**

- The people who fall in love with you- Ah, how do I answer that question! LOL
- The people who are afraid of you- I hope that I'm not that scary looking. Never be afraid of me... I don't bite!
- The people who you light a fire up their asses- Bring it! I welcome the competition....your only as good as those you compete against!
- People who are shocked by your achievements- People who know me know that you never know what to expect out of me next. But expect me to be a threat at it. I may not beat you this time but I'll worry the hell out of you always!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, why is it better to be a freak of nature (through hard work) than a dime a dozen average Jane?**

Not everyone likes the muscle that I carry but everyone respects the work and dedication that it takes to achieve it. It's nice being different. I really don't want to just blend in with every other girl. If everyone was the same - what a boring world this would be!

**CRITICAL BENCH: I would like to pick your insightful mind a little more. Tell us, what is your advice for people facing extreme adversity of any kind?**

God only gives you what you can handle. Never be afraid to step up to the challenge. If you want something bad enough than you'll do what it takes to achieve it! Keep pushing!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Outside of the gym, what do you enjoy doing?**

Being a mother and wife!

**CRITICAL BENCH: You and Mike had a son named Ryan. How is your son Ryan?**

Ryan is a little gym rat. He had his picture in Powerlifting USA before he was 1 year old!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Has your routine changed over the past 10 years?**

Not a whole lot has changed. I still stay with basic old school movements!

**CRITICAL BENCH: How has your perception in regards to training and life changed since you have become such a big time force in iron sports?**

I try to stay humble! I learned a long time ago that it can be taken as fast as it comes.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Christi, how do you see the future of power lifting? How do you compare and contrast raw to shirt benching?**

I see power lifting heading back to Raw. I loved benching in a shirt because I just loved the puzzle that it was to master it, but I believe that the raw is a good move for the sport! I just think that the gear is creating a monster. The lifters are handling weights that their bodies are never meant to handle. If the gear ripped then your fate was in the hands of the spotters....

**CRITICAL BENCH: What goes on your mind before a big lift? What about on the bodybuilding stage?**



You know. I really don't stress much. I just picture the lift or the pose perfect in my head and not get to worried. This is supposed to be fun. I try to keep it that way!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What sport is harder bodybuilding or power lifting would you say?**

Bodybuilding! I find myself looking in the mirror ALL the time judging my body. Plus the dieting is killer. In power lifting I just lifted and enjoyed it!

**CRITICAL BENCH: You use to be big into gear lifting but now you're going RAW. I think it is great that you can be successful in each but what is it about RAW that draws you?**

I loved geared benching. I love the mechanics of the shirt and the lift. It was like a puzzle to me and I was good at it. The other lifter in the gym would ask me to watch their bench to see what was going wrong and to tell them what to do with the shirt to fix it. But I contribute my injured shoulder to it also. You put your body under extreme weight that it wasn't meant to handle.

The raw lifting is just FUN! There isn't any unnecessary stress put on you. Your lift is your lift... no one can take the credit away from you and give it to your shirt!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was the best advice that you were ever given?**

The best advice given to me wasn't from power sports at all. It was given to me when I rodeoed. Someone once told me you can learn something from everyone. Even the biggest idiot might have the trick to fix your problem. Or at least give you idea that could send you in the right direction!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Well, Christi it has been an honor talking to you today. What a past decade of success you have been in the world of strength sports and most of all, what a ride! I'm sure you can look back at your training journey and say "What a ride it has been!" In closing, who would you like to thank?**

Oh yeah! I want to thank my sponsor [BMF SPORTS](#) for giving me the opportunity to represent their company! Justin Harris of Troponin Nutrition for doing so a fantastic job with my diet! I could never do this without it.

And nothing would be possible without my husband and family. Mike puts up with a lot from me when I'm gearing up for a contest and he keeps me focused. I love him dearly!

Thanks for all the support from my friends and followers. Love you all!

# STRONGMAN ELLIOTT HULSE

*Interviewed by Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com –April 2008*



*Strongman Elliott & Elliott Playing RB at St. Johns U*

*My name is Mike Westerdal and I want to introduce you to a friend of mine named Elliott Hulse who resides in St. Petersburg, FL.*

*The funny thing is I didn't always like Elliott. In fact I used to want to tear his head off every time I saw him! I'm pretty sure the feeling was mutual. You see Elliott was a full scholarship RB at D-IAA St. Johns University and I was a linebacker at Central CT State, so we have faced each other on the football field twice during our careers. I have to give Elliott credit, he had some really good games against us, but we did win both games. Sorry Elliott, but it's the truth..lol.*

*Currently Elliott is a certified strength and conditioning specialist running strength camps for athletes in the Tampa Bay area. He competes in strongman competitions and has been on a roll. We met up so that Elliott could torture me with some of his strongman conditioning drills. Let me tell you, I'm learning the hard way that payback is a bit\*ch. I can vouch this guy is intense, so lets go ahead and start the interview.*

**Critical Bench: Elliott. It's a pleasure to pick your brain. Give our readers a brief background intro about yourself.**

I grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Long Island, New York. My parents moved here from Belize and we were the only "people of color" to move into my block in the early 80's. Basically, we ruined the neighborhood. Now the same block is teaming with black and Puerto Rican gangs... The Hulse's popped the "suburban cherry", beeotch!

I am the oldest of 4 children. And my uncle lived with us when I was young. He was a freak of nature. He was a black belt in Northern Sholin Kung Fu and used to break brick with his hands

in my basement; he ran marathons; he performed backflips, handstand push ups and was a competitive bodybuilder too! It was like living with a real live action hero... He-Man was a hungry hobo compared to my Uncle Elroy.

He taught my brothers and me how to do push-ups, chin-ups, crunches, summersaults, and flips when most kids our age were still spitting up baby formula. Also, it turns out that I inherited his genes (from my mother's side). I was designed (or bred, according to my dad) to be an action hero too.

In high school I used my God-given (and Hulse honed) strength and speed to dominate on the football field and earn an athletic scholarship to St. Johns University. At this time my uncle had been teaching people how to get strong for money, today we call this a Personal Trainer. He taught me how to get stronger and faster using barbell exercises like dead lifts and cleans in my basement.



During my summers in college, the other players on my team would travel 30 minutes from Queens to train with me and my brother in my parent's basement on Long Island. They knew that I was on to something since... I was training with only a barbell and a 4' box and I was the fastest player on the team. I ran a 4.34, 40 at a bodyweight of 230 lbs.

You said brief intro... so I'm gonna wrap this up. Long story, short... I studied Strength and Conditioning in college and received my CSCS. This took me down a long journey of "Learn All The Wrong Shit, Till' You Realize You Were Right". And after losing 40 pounds and calling myself a "functional exercise specialist" I have now come full circle and flip 1000 pound tires and train athletes with nothing but a barbell... like the good old days!

**Critical Bench: Great story! Lets get right to it. Why should all men be strong?**

**I guess you are referring to one of my "Nature's Contempt For Weakness" rants. Well, here it is... God loves perfection, I don't care what you say about love and all the gushy bullshit people believe about God and Nature. Just look around you! God, Nature, The Universe or whatever the hell you call it... is completely objective about you, me and everything around us. If we would just take our eyes off of our own belly buttons and pay attention we would see that God simply gets rid of everything that is not "Good" or in my terminology "Strong".**

Its easy for us to be objective about organisms other than ourselves so lets take a look at plants for example, or better yet - the crops that we eat. Every knowledgeable farmer knows that strong soil and strong seeds will yield strong plants. But here is the situation; most all of the soil in the US has been stripped of its mineral composition due to inept farming practices. So, the plants that are grown in this soil will be weak. This is evident due to the fact that pests will attack and dissolve of these weak organisms... pests, parasites and, funguses are God's garbage collectors.

Well, in order to prevent these "weak" plants from being attacked, we spray them with chemicals that keep pests away. When we do this, we are basically saying. "God, screw-you! We need to sell these plants, so we're gonna by-pass your selective process of weeding out the weak... and we'll force them to grow, nourish and reproduce more of their weakened genes." - And then we eat these weak plants or feed them to the weak animals which we eat... and we get weak!

My point here is not to attack conventional farming practices (I'll rant about that at a later date). My point IS that that very same process goes on with human beings and it has created a race of "half-grown", physically, morally, mentally and spiritually weak people.

We allow the weakening of not only our physical bodies but of our character and will every time we avoid challenges, succumb to fears and live below our inborn potential. Nature or God hates weakness! And here is the evidence: Obesity, Depression, Designer Diseases, Cancers, Chronic Disease, Arthritis, Back Pain and the enormous list of ailments that we ALL live with or will get someday.

These "dis-eases" are analogous to the pests that attack the weak plants. God is trying to either 1. Dispose of us due to poor health, so that we can no longer thrive and reproduce (consider infertility!) or 2. WAKE US UP!!! The great thing about being a human being and chronic illness is that 9 times out of 10, we created our "weaknesses" with poor mental, physical and spiritual hygiene and we can un-do the damage by adopting new practices. But unfortunately, most people die as victims of their self-inflicted "weaknesses" and never realize that they had a choice!



Strength, on the other hand has been stigmatized by our "everyone's a winner" society. It's PC to be and accept weakness and despise strength. Nowhere is this more evident than in our public schools where the feminine agenda to "pussify" men has run rampant. Don't get me wrong, I am all for women's rights and have a **STRONG** conviction about the women's critical role in society (I admire women and the strength they possess for among many things, child bearing... or at least the ones strong enough to do it naturally, as women have relinquished their strength as well.) My wife is the strongest woman I know and she weighs less than 120



pounds. But she is comfortable in her feminine strength and feels no need to pussify me by the conventional means, I respect and honor ALL of her requests and wishes, and I do so from a place of masculine strength!

OK, I'm gonna cut my rant off right there as I may end up hurting some feelings! Next question.

**Critical Bench: Well that answers that; dare I continue the interview? You've competed in Strongman competitions and qualified for nationals. Tell us a little bit about why you chose to compete in strongman and how it's treating you so far.**

Without any pontification, my simple answer is... I needed something to do and I like lifting heavy things. I attended a Crossfit class and the speaker was Tom Mitchell, he is the Florida State Chairman for NAS. He invited

me to his house one Saturday to train and the very first time I scraped up my forearms lifting stones in his front yard... I knew I was in love!

Strongman has been treating me quite well. I've taken 1st place in all 3 shows that I've competed in. The last show was my toughest as I was competing against last years national champ.

**Critical Bench: Sounds like you've got the "Iron Bug". What are your favorite and least favorite strongman event?**

I don't think about or become emotionally attached to any of the events. In fact, I could care less what I am lifting as long as its heavy. What I don't like about Strongman is that I can't do it all the time. This stuff is so heavy that I am forced to take a deload week at least once every 3 weeks. I'm learning to enjoy deloading but I'm looking for some literature that would support heavy lifting during deloading ;) Let me know if you find some.

**Critical Bench: Heavy lifting during a deload week, sounds good to me. How does strongman training differ from the way a football player would train? Or do you think football players could benefit from strongman techniques?**

I think that football can benefit from strongman techniques but there is a ton more that football players need to consider, especially as it relates to speed.

As a strongman I do very little sprinting anymore and it shows! I was running out the rain the other day and I felt like Lou Ferrigno doing the "Hulk Trot", but he still caught the bad guys! WTF?

Football players require greater work capacity, agility and, lateral movement capacity as well. But, I DO like using tire flips and keg loading for triple extension and explosiveness; and keg carrying for upper back and hamstring strength... all football players can use this.

**Critical Bench: What is up with your thighs? Your quads are huge! Have you always had tree trunks or did certain exercises help you build them?**

Like I mentioned earlier... I was bred to be an "action hero". So, I was born with these things man! It's not easy being a freak, people always pointing and staring but the moment they need a 'tick thighed' man to rescue their kitty... I'm the first one they call.

Learning how to back squat at the age of 12 helped a little also.



**Critical Bench: You own "[Strength Camp](#)" a strength training facility in St. Petersburg, FL where you have Men's Boot Camp classes at 6am and 6pm, Monday through Friday. What kind of things torture do you put people through that attend these Boot Camp sessions?**

I like that you used the term "torture" because in a way... it is. You see, the guys that get the best results in my Boot Camp are typically Type A dudes that either were in the military, firemen, police, played sports or are high level executives. It's these types of guys that understand that you don't get anything by taking the easy route and many of them crave "torture" or a REAL challenge. They know that were there is no challenge there is not growth.

**STRENGTH  
CAMP**

It's a 5-day per week program. Below is the format that we follow, every 4 weeks the exercises change but the principles are the same.

**Monday - Upper Body (push-ups, chin-ups. Band rows, curls, shoulder raises...)**

**Tuesday - Conditioning (cone and latter drills, 4 corner drills, etc...)**

**Wednesday - Lower Body (back squats, dead lifts, lunges, glute-ham, etc...)**

**Thursday - Conditioning (sled dragging)**

**Friday - Strongman (tire flips, keg loading, keg carrying, farmers carries, etc...)** I designed this program with 3 things in mind:

1. "All Men NEED To Be Strong", hence the name Strength Camp (we don't need anymore cardio camps around)

2. Fun. Everyone gets bored in the gym at some time or another. At my camp the guys tell me that they get butterflies at the beginning of every month until they learn what I have in store for them this time! This is fun!

3. Results. The bottom line is that you'll get what you want if you just follow my lead. Most guys lose up to 10 pounds during the 2 week free trial that I offer at <http://www.strengthcamp.com/bootcamp.htm>



**Critical Bench: You train a lot of athletes at your facility as well. Having been a full scholarship RB at St. Johns University, what would you tell a high school football player that came to you to get bigger and stronger for the upcoming season?**

First of all, I want to know what type of commitment level they have. You can be the best coach in the world and have the best program in the world but if you have to waste your time motivating a lazy kid you'll get frustrated with lack of results (or at least I do). It must be very clear to him and yourself, what is the goal and what is he willing to do.

Getting bigger and stronger takes a ton of commitment in and out of the weight room. Just training hard is not enough. He and his parents need to understand that someone is going to have to prepare his meals, even if this just means making some PB&J sandwiches for him to take to school. My dad made me get a job at GNC to pay for my supplements with an employee discount. Parental involvement is big!

He is going to have to make some choices about the company he keeps and the amount of rest he'll be getting every night and on the weekends. I hate nothing more than putting time and energy into a kid who pisses away all of his progress by staying out late on the weekends drinking or playing Madden. You need to get stronger every week and we can't afford to waste time!

I may sound unreasonable, but I believe that you've got to do "unreasonable" things to get extraordinary results. If gaining 30 pounds and winning an athletic scholarship were easy to do, then everyone would be playing for FSU right now. Especially if genetics aren't on your side, you've got to be disciplined about your calorie intake and rest.

Secondly is the training program. And the reason why say second is because if the attitude and commitment level are not right, who cares what program you choose.

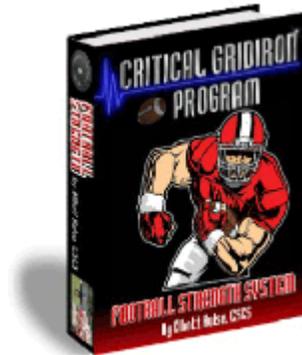
There are a few principles that I ensure are followed when teaching young athletes how to get bigger and stronger. By the way, this is my specialty... there are guys out there that make you faster, jump higher more agile. Not me, although those things are a part of my program much of

my emphasis is placed on getting athletes BIG and STRONG. It just happens to be what I am good at teaching.

**Here are the principles:**

1. You must lift HEAVY weights.
2. You must EAT lots of high quality food.
3. You must REST and get sound sleep.

As far as principle for getting big and strong... that's it. There are plenty of methods for achieving this (i.e. power lifting, bodybuilding, etc.) but those 3 principles must still be there.



**Critical Bench: We just launched your [Critical Gridiron Program](#), which has been getting outstanding feedback in only it's 3rd week! Give our readers a brief summary of the system and tell us what makes it different.**

I wrote this program because I was getting a ton of questions from coaches and athletes from all over the country that wanted to know how to get BIGGER and STRONGER for football. And this program does just that.

I provide a step-by-step formula for getting jacked for football, which includes. Weight Training, Strongman, Speed Training, Meal Planning and Implementation. Basically the exact same formula that I use at my gym to help kids gain up to 23 pounds in less than 90 days. I don't want to bore you with the details so make sure you get the whole story [here](#).

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[Critical Gridiron Program](#) by Elliott Hulse, CSCS  
**Football Strength Training Workouts!**

"Are You Ready For The Only Football Strength Training Program That Guarantees Athletes Will Gain Serious Mass, Strength & Speed?"

*How much could you or your athletes benefit from a strength & conditioning program that gives you a step-by-step football training blueprint for developing superior strength and speed?*

"So, how exactly do you build super STRONG and FAST football players? With the Critical Gridiron Program! Read more about this incredible [football strength training workout program](#)."

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**Critical Bench: Why do you think Functional training is a bunch of BS when it comes to football training?**

We'll first off, it is what is typically called "functional training" that is BS. True functional training is good shit. To me this includes Strongman training and anything that is considered Sports Specific Preparedness.

Most of the new and cutting edge sports and fitness training 'guru's' are great marketers! They understand that in order to sell tickets to their seminars and sell their books - they must devise new and exciting techniques for you to get excited about.

Also, because they must appeal to the parents of young children, who want to see their 'little tigers' doing speed and agility drills that seem safe and fun they spend your time and hard earned money teaching you fancy foot tricks that don't make athletes any faster!

"Functional Training" with physio balls, rubber bands and wobble boards will NOT make your athletes stronger.

I don't know about you, but I would like to coach a team of STRONG, Massive and Explosive athletes. The bottom line is that this is only achievable when they are lifting heavy weights, eating a ton of food and sprinting / jumping often.

Athletes cannot get STRONG, Massive and Explosive using what has been termed as "Functional Training."

Please don't make the same mistake that I did, and waste your time and money learning training systems that are suited for old ladies and circus performers. There are many savvy marketers out there disguised as "Strength Coaches" that are tricking coaches and athletes into believing that their techniques will prevent injuries and produce results - this is simply untrue. Also, several of them have fancy tools; toys and machines for sale... remember that I received a college scholarship by training with a few weight plates and 1 barbell in my parent's basement.

So-called "functional training" has its place - but is isn't in my weight room.

### **Critical Bench: Do you ever miss playing football?**

Yea, I miss chasing people down and dragging them to the floor or dropping my shoulder and putting some poor sucker on his back gasping for air. But, I'm playing a bigger game now. This took me some time to accept, but I now see that Life is a game and if I play I with the same reckless abandon as I did football... it's as fun as hell!



Most athletes get the "Al Bundy" syndrome when they don't look for another way to express their competitive spirit beyond their sport. The same attitude that sacks quarterbacks and tramples linebackers makes you successful in life.

People are scared to play Life hard. They are afraid of making mistakes and "failing", so they end up playing "safe" and are rewarded with a "safe and boring" life. If you play football being cautious and "safely" you'll either remain on the bench (like most people) or get hurt!

When you sprint down the field on a kick-off and smash anything in your way, you make big plays! It's the same in life.

I am completely irresponsible and reckless. I sprint full speed and God rewards this! I wouldn't trade my life for anything. I enjoy this game just as much as I enjoyed football.



**Critical Bench: What do you like to do when you're not whipping people into shape or kicking your own ass preparing for a contest?**

I've got a MILF for a wife and 2 gorgeous daughters, and another on the way. I just love lying around being a bum with them. It's the coolest thing to be laying on the floor in my living room with my children climbing all over my chest and abdomen, jumping on and off of me like an amusement park. I feel like the ferocious lion that you see on the Discovery Channel with his cubs nipping at his ears and play fighting with their massive patriarch.

When I've got time, I read. I like Ralph Waldo Emerson and motivational shit, it gets me all amped up so that I can go and play hard.

**Critical Bench: What do you see in the future for yourself both professionally and personal?**

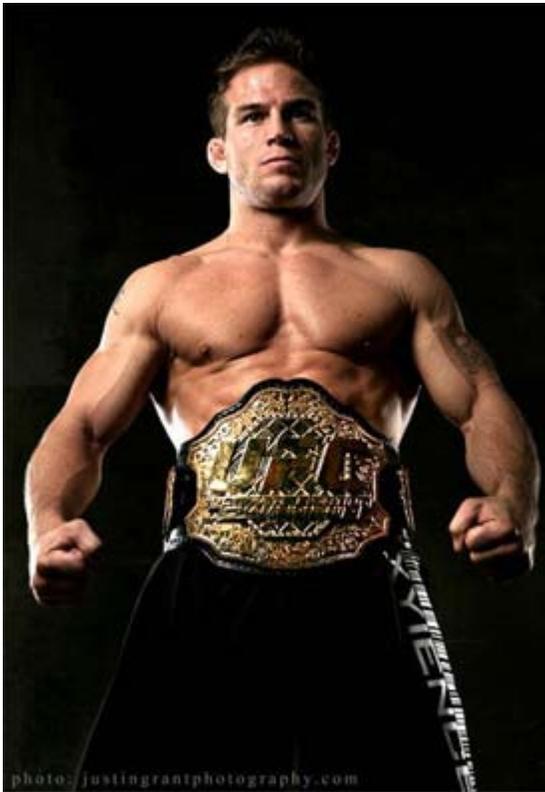
More fun, more service, more money, more kids and more life. More! God is for continuous expansion and evolution... I'm just riding the wave.

**Critical Bench: Thanks for letting us inside your head. I'm sure our readers will be cheering for you at Nationals so you can get that pro card.**

# MMA FIGHTER SEAN "THE MUSCLE SHARK" SHERK

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –January 2007*

On October 14, 2006, at UFC 64, Sean Sherk fulfilled his life long dream and became the UFC world champion! This not only made Sean Sherk the undisputed UFC world light weight champion of the world but this also made Sean Sherk the first light weight champion in the History of the UFC! Before Sherk became the world champion of the UFC, he had held a record of 35 wins and only 2 losses in his professional full contact fighting career! This is one of the best records ever seen in full contact fighting. Sean Sherk has also fought in UFC main events. Critical Bench got to talk to Sean, and with no further ado we bring you one of the best full contact fighters who ever lived, Seannnn Sherrrrr!!



**CRITICAL BENCH:** It's Ben Tatar from Critical Bench, and I am here with the first ever light weight champion of the UFC Sean Sherk. Sean, from your resume, we know that you have accomplished a lot as a fighter. Out of everything you have achieved in the sport of full contact fighting, what has been your favorite moment so far?

Sean Sherk: Thanks Ben. It's an honor to be here with Critical Bench. My favorite moment was when I won the Title!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** How did it feel to win the Title and become the first ever UFC light weight champion of the world!?

Sean Sherk: It was great! Winning the title was a dream come true and even more! It was something I waited for a long time!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** How long do you plan on keeping this title?

Sean Sherk: Forever!!!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** hahahaha! FOREVER! Haha, I love that answer! Who are you defending the title against next?

Sean Sherk: Joe Stephenson should be next. BJ Penn is dropping weight so he might get a title shot.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Tell us about your weight training routine?

Sean Sherk : I lift 6 days a week, pretty much 2 body parts a day, 6 days week. I super set everything.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Sean what do you do for cardio?**

Sean Sherk: I run and swim everyday. I do sprints and I also run the bleachers every single day.

**CRITICAL BENCH: On your way to the top of the UFC which three opponents have been your toughest?**

Sean Sherk: Karo Parisyan, Benji Radach, and Nick Diaz.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What motivated you to becoming a full contact fighter? How did it all begin?**

Sean Sherk: I grew up as a fan of the sport. I knew all the fighters, all the names and all about the sport. It was a dream of mine to be one of them. I also came from a wrestling background and grew up fighting.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What's your advice for the person who might want to be a full contact fighter in the future?**

Sean Sherk : I get emails asking me this all the time. Just train hard, and focus!



**CRITICAL BENCH: Away from fighting in the Octagon, do you fight in bars? If so, do you still choose to fight in bars?**

Sean Sherk: I've had my share fair of fights. I have too much to lose now. I have no reason to go to a bar and fight when I can go to a gym and fight.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How do you see the future of full contact fighting?**

Sean Sherk: I think Full Contact fighting is the new big sport, and it's just going to keep getting bigger. It's going to be as popular as any sport. There will be million dollar pay days! Haha

**CRITICAL BENCH: How does your family feel about you being a pro full contact fighter and one of the best in the world at it?**

Sean Sherk: My family is real supportive. When I first started fighting, they didn't want me to. Now they are real big fans and they support me all the time.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Do you have any funny stories you would like to share?**

Sean Sherk: I have too many! Haha

**CRITICAL BENCH: Then just give us one.**

Sean Sherk: One funny moment was when I fought Karo the 2nd time. The first I won by decision and during our 2nd fight I ended up stopping him! 3,000 people were at the show and after I stopped him, I tried to do a front flip for the first time. I landed on my butt and kned myself on the head in front of 3,000 people!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Very cool. You had an excellent journey Sean, is there anything else you would like to say?**

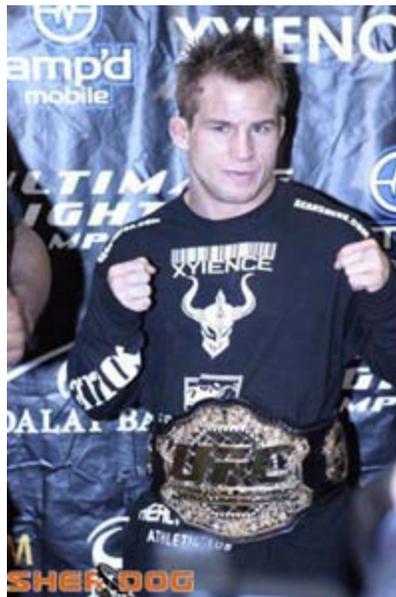
Sean Sherk: I think Critical Bench covered me very well!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Awesome! So, you train hard and put in a ton of work. All of us get to sit back, and watch you kick ass. All of your big victories speak for themselves!**

Sean Sherk: Hahaha! Yep. Exactly.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Sean it was great speaking with you. In closing who would you like to thank?**

Sean Sherk : I want to thank Minnesota Martial arts because I wouldn't be fighting if it wasn't for them. I want to give a special thanks to Xyience. I want to thank Critical Bench and Ben Tatar for taking the time to interview me. Lastly, I want to thank all of my fans for always supporting me. You can check me out at [WWW.SEANSHERK.COM](http://WWW.SEANSHERK.COM)



# POWERLIFTER DONNIE THOMPSON

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –January 2009*



Donnie Thompson's recently recorded the highest total in the history of powerlifting. Donnie performed a 2,905 pound total at the IPA Senior Nationals which were held November 22-23 in York, Pennsylvania. Thompson squatted 1,235 pounds, benched 910, and deadlifted 760 pounds for the highest total in the history of powerlifting.

**Critical Bench: Donnie, before I ask you about setting the all time world record in the history of powerlifting, humor us by introducing yourself to the Powerlifting USA readers.**

There is not much that the other powerlifters do not know about me. I am difficult to get along with. I live in a place I built called the compound. It is an apartment on one side and a training facility on the other. I have a baby on the way and she should be born by the publication of this article. The mother and I are still friends but are not together. We plan to do what is best for her. Her name will be Bridget. Hopefully she will look like her mother. She is the reason I am quitting Powerlifting. I was married a while back but got rid of her non-working ass after five months. It was that or kill her. However, 'hateful wife season' didn't start yet so I did not want to be fined and jailed for choking her out. Still trying to get that license though. When I make a mistake, it is always a good one.

There is always drama in my life and that is something that will always be. I am not proud of it but when you are very intense about a mission you are on, drama surrounds you. That is my life and I will not apologize for it.

**Critical Bench: Donnie, you have just totaled 2905lbs and set the biggest total in the history of powerlifting! How did it feel to set the biggest total of all time?**

I was happy but not elated. It was kind of depressing. Whenever you leave room for more poundage on the platform, it is hard to celebrate. The real hell starts when you get home and play different scenarios over and over in your head of what might have been if you only got this weight or that. Then when I got home, on Tuesday, my celebration was greeted with my landlord telling me my rent check bounced, my Yukon was repo-ed and my girlfriend quit talking to me! Great welcome home. I really haven't even thought about the meet since I have been home. Too much else going on.



*Mandy Stafford holds a board for Donnie as he trains for his 910 LB bench*

**Critical Bench: You said drama follow you, you were right. Donnie, what are your best lifts?**

My Best Lifts:

1235 squat  
910 bench  
832 Deadlift

**Critical Bench: What are your future powerlifting goals?**

I do not have any. I met them all and I am quitting now. I will do no more meets. I am done.

**Critical Bench: You'll be remembered forever! Donnie, people talk about you being the best squatter in the world today. Many athletes we have interviewed before mention your name as one of the greats. How does that make you feel to be called one of the best by your peers? Do you like being compared to other top notch lifters in the game?**



I do not like being compared. We are all different. Also, I know everyone who can squat what I can, near what I can or more than I can. I met them, have their phone or email, and pick their brain. And they do mine. I know I am the best squatter now. If I trained for one or two more meets in my gear, I would really master it and squat the WR highest ever. I am very happy I did not pass up Vladimir my last meet. That sits well with me because I could keep going. Vladimir is going to have a hard time overcoming his injury so he may never break his old record. I am proud to say that I did not break it either.

**Critical Bench: Donnie, before you attempt a 1235lbs squat, what is going through your mind?**

I try to calm myself. If I get too emotional, I try to laugh. I did this when I squatted 1235lb. Thinking of my weak points and remembering to execute helps me a lot. Sometimes I flash through all the people I feel have wronged me. This helps too. I can kill them in my mind and not get arrested.

**Critical Bench: Remind me not to piss you off. Donnie, you were a free agent with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and then you were signed by the Arena Football League. Did you enjoy football more or powerlifting?**

I enjoyed them both equally. When I was a football player playing Center, I was the best I could be. Powerlifting I did the very best I could. So they are equal

**Critical Bench: How would you compare and contrast people in the NFL to the people in powerlifting?**

In football, the lesser player can hide in the midst of his teammates and ride. He will be found out eventually. In powerlifting, it is only you on the platform and you can't fake it. I have seen some lifters coast on the training of their superior lifting partners, but that is short lived. In the end, the cream will rise to the top. The training is very similar for both. The football player will not concentrate on singles like the lifter, but the training is basically the same. The back of the body needs to be developed much more than the front of the body. For years, this was not the case. Mirrors are for strip clubs and bedrooms. Keep them out of the training facility.



*This was the day Donnie squatted 1235 pounds!*

**Critical Bench: Donnie, are you happy that you didn't stick to the Arena Football League and that you went to powerlifting instead?**

I played 5-6 years in Arena football. I have zero regrets leaving it. The pay sucked so I decided to be in another sport that was harder and payed even less, Powerlifting!

**Critical Bench: Yup, and you propelled to the top in a sport that was equally challenging and paid less than pro football. Donnie, what is your advice for the beginner who is learning how to squat and would love to squat big?**

Learn how to squat correctly right from the start. Squat away from the knees and push out on your knees. Wall squats help with this. If you squat badly for years, it is nearly impossible to relearn. You will always revert back to your old style when you get heavy and lose your emotions. Incorporate the box squats into your routine but not exclusively. Keep changing things up. Then build all the muscle groups up that work the squat. Glutes, hamstrings, inner thighs, abs and lower/upper back. As you can see, there is plenty to do after your last set of squats.

**Critical Bench: Donnie, give us your squat routine.**

I squat heavy on Mondays and light on Fridays. I incorporate gear into the heavy day now. I spend time on assistant work and never shirk it off. I do not miss the extras. Even if I have to do them the next day. That is why I am walking away from Powerlifting and not limping away.

**Critical Bench: How should the beginner or intermediate squatter squat differently than you do?**

I think they should use a progressive overload system to build a lot of muscle. Most of these guys do not know muscle's address. You can't tell them apart from the audience. Also pull the sled a lot. Build the back of the body or develop it as much as possible. Don't rely on the lifting gear like the advanced guys do. They are developed and the beginner and intermediate is not. The tendons and ligaments in the joints need to be very strong over time so use full range and lock out your lifts. Do not cut them short ala bodybuilding style.



**Critical Bench: Good tips, thanks. Tell us about your eating plan for powerlifting. What supplements do you take?**

I eat three meals a day like everyone else. Just a little larger than some people. Then I try to drink shakes in between. I use Maximus from atlargenutrition. I sought them out based on references from athletes and other lifters. Not cause I could get it for free.

**Critical Bench: Will you share your powerlifting routine in detail?**

No I will not. It sounds ridiculous when people read it and they are only looking in a keyhole of what I have been doing for 28 years. My routines are mine that I have learned and put to the test over many years. I have finally learned to incorporate gear in training. I lift heavy squats of some kind on Monday's. Wednesday is my heavy bench day. Friday is my light lower body day. Sunday is my light upper body day. Tuesday and Thursday are my rehab and recovery days. That is it. As far as specifics, it would do more harm than good to disclose my training information!

**Critical Bench: Fair enough. How does your family feel about your powerlifting success and the fact that you are the best in the world right now?**

My family could care less about my Powerlifting. I have never fit in society and even in my own family. The only family member that ever understood me was my mean grandmother, Grandma 'V'! She died eleven years ago so my family Powerlifting 'feelings' went to the grave with her. My parents have helped with money in the past, but always wanted me to quit.



*Donnie deadlifted 760 lbs on this historic day.*

**Critical Bench: What other adversities have you had to overcome?**

I started competing in 1998. I was a commercial gym owner. Gold's Gym opened up right next to me about nine tenths of a mile down the road. My membership dropped from 800 to 400 overnight. I just bought a house for \$175,000! I was engaged to be married that summer. Long story short, my expenses all went up, my income cut in half and everyone seemed to bail. I lost my house to foreclosure. I turned my truck back in to the dealer and the bride to be, left me! I sold my gym to a wolf in waiting for practically nothing. All my life's work was gone.

Powerlifting was the only thing that made any sense. I overtrained and went down to the 220 class. I averaged 15 training sessions a week. So, I rented a small warehouse downtown and made a powerlifting gym there called the compound. I was jobless until 2006 (I worked, but not real jobs with benefits or respectability) when I got into physical therapy and strength development. I love it and it is a great job. My totals went up tons when I started working for Progressive Sports! My friend, Mike Johnston, got me the job.

**Critical Bench: What's next? What would you like to do in the future?**

I really enjoy rehab work and the strength end of it. However, I could see myself being a strength coach at the University level. That is where I would have the biggest impact as far as job stimulation and effecting people's lives. I will never be broke again. I plan on being a millionaire in eight years.

**Critical Bench: Awesome. Donnie, tell Powerlifting USA a secret about yourself that people don't know.**

My life is really out in the open and always has been. It is filled with drama. However, the one thing that a lot of people do not know about me is I am a true romantic at heart. I would love nothing more than to meet a woman who is into me like I am into her. I have had close encounters but they always end tumultuously! I have met someone now that fits the bill. I just hope she can stick it out with me through the baby and my temperament. Donnie Thompson is very difficult to get along with emotionally. It will take an act of God to get her to stay with me. I am trying to tone my meanness down around her so I won't screw things up. If I end up by myself, I deserve it for the way I am to her and others sometime.



**Critical Bench: Donnie, what drives you to be the best?**

You need to find one thing in life that you can pursue that you love. Fortunately, I have had two things, football and Powerlifting. With football, you are limited to the team and administration, but Powerlifting had nobody to hold me back. Numbers are attainable and make sense to me. You can always best yourself. Before I die, I wanted to tell my kids that their daddy did this one thing, and did it to the best of his ability! And whether I failed or won, I was at one time the very best I could be! I left nothing on the platform.

**Critical Bench: When you aren't powerlifting, what do you enjoy doing?**

I love to watch my John Wayne DVD's. I can't get enough of the Duke. When this world starts going crazy to me, I put a Duke movie in and life makes sense again. Men need to be men again. Watching a few John Wayne movies a week is a good start to fight against the times we are in, this age of gayness and tough women.

**Critical Bench: That's hilarious. Donnie, how do you see the future of powerlifting?**

Lifter consolidation. Federations exist to serve the lifter, but lifters are like sheep and follow blindly. It is ass backwards. Without the lifter, Powerlifting competitions will cease to exist. Everyone that is a federation loyalist, tell me what benefit that is to Powerlifting. The rules are the same across the board for Powerlifting. We have open, raw, equipped and drug free. Pick one and do it. The Internet should be used to post results. Websites can offer lifters advice. In ten years, things will fall into place. Promoters are already trying to be gracious to the top lifters in each division. Once the venues pick back up, television contracts will come and the public will see more than just a weight being lifted, they will see the person who is lifting. Right now there is zero respect for the lifter who accomplishes great things. I think it is a lack of understanding. Most lifters are just gym bums. They could not possibly comprehend the training it takes to be a national and world champ.

**Critical Bench: What is the best and worst advice you were ever told before?**

The best advice was the advice Louie Simmons gave me in 1998 about training properly. I researched it out and put it to the test. I was patient and believed in it. It worked. Changed my whole philosophy on training.

The worst advice I ever had was my friends not stopping me from getting married! I blame them because one of them could have knocked me upside the head and told me not to do it. I blame them for me marrying such a scumbag!



**Critical Bench: What makes Donnie different from everyone else?**

My determination does hands down. I suffer from lack of confidence at times, depression and anxiety. I overcome them all in time. It takes me a little longer to develop than my competitors but I am steady and never ever quit! I am determination from my bone marrow out to the hair on my skin. Also, I lost my fear of heavy weights. I never think a weight is too heavy. I just am never scared of any attempt I take. Most people can never overcome their emotions. I learned to.

**Critical Bench: What makes Donnie happy and what ticks Donnie off?**

What makes me happy is a gym full of lifters trying to get strong. What ticks me off are people quitting and not showing up. Why did you waste my time in the first place? Then they blame me for their failure! That pisses me off. Everyone that has come across me knows my commitment to Powerlifting. I live and train in a gym made for it. Don't show up if you are not on the same page.

**Critical Bench: Donnie, people will be talking about you in 100 years from now. How do you want to be remembered?**

I really do not care if I am remembered. That is not important to me. Like the general said with some of the words twisted to meet my point- "Old lifters never die, they just fade away!"

**Critical Bench: Donnie, it has been a pleasure. In closing who would you like to thank?**

My parents, Don & Adrienne Thompson. My brother Joshua. All my training partners past and present. Some of the lifters I admire and patterned myself after; Garry Frank, Paul Childress, Matt Smith, John Stafford, Andy Bolton, Brian Siders, Ed Coan, Shawn Frankl, Louie Simmons, Beau Moore, Gene Rychlack, Chad Aichs, Clay Brandenburg, Ryan Celli, John Manly, Chuck Vogelwohl, and many others I can't remember this minute.

Sponsors: Richard Sorin, Sorinex Equipment. Scotty Mills, PASCO Inc., Mark Blackberg - Jungle Gym. Chris Mason - atlargenutrition. Will and Marge Millman. The Montanari Brothers - Gold's Gym New Haven, CT. Dave Tate - Elitefts. John Inzer - squat suit. Progressive Sports Physical Therapy.

Personal: Jessica Fulmer, [Mandy Stafford](#) and her Mama, Tim Fogle, Mark Challait, Nicole Dominick, April Stroud. Neil Foy, Tom Frederick, Billy Mays, Tom Korbini, and many others that were there for me.

# POWERLIFTER ED COAN

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –January 2003*

Nobody has dominated powerlifting or any sport for that matter like Ed Coan has. Coan discovered he wasn't made for bodybuilding but when Ed first started squatting he squatted 2x per week and maxed out each time, going up 5lbs per time till he hit 500. By this time he knew he was going to be special in the world of powerlifting. Coan began powerlifting as a 181-pound lifter. He squatted and deadlifted 780-pounds and bench-pressed 485-pounds. He got bigger in his early twenties and at 198lbs Coan squatted and pulled 863-pounds while bench-pressing slightly over 500-pounds.

As a 220-pound lifter, he set over seventy world records and became the lightest man to shatter the 2400 barrier. When he shattered the 2400-pound barrier, nobody was even close- the second best 220-pound powerlifting total was 2102. Coan exceeded the all-time powerlifting total with an historic 2463-total. He became the all-time greatest powerlifter in the history of the sport. Coan not only dominated his weight class but he dominated the giants in the super heavy weight classes- Not only did he beat the 350lbs giants but he destroyed them! Even though, he weighed nearly 200lbs less then the greatest super heavy weights of all time his best numbers were in the same exact ballpark as greats like Kaz and Paul Anderson.



Imagine trying to squat 920 deep? You thought a 400lbs deadlift was tough? Add another 400lbs to that 400 then add another 100lbs and you still don't lift as much as Coan. I had the opportunity to interview the strongest man there ever was, is and perhaps ever will be. Records are made to be broken but under the conditions Coan lifts- it may never happen. When you learn more about Coan the hundreds of trophies he has and being the best isn't what is important to him. Coan is concerned about his lifting; personal records are the name of the game. Here is my interview with the man with super human strength. Ed Coan.

**BT: ED, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?**

Ed Coan: My name is Edward Ignatius Coan, born on 7/24/63. I have 3 sisters and 1 brother.

**BT: WHAT ARE YOUR BEST LIFTS?**

Ed Coan: My best squat in the USPF-1019 deadlift-901, I'm going to bench 620 really soon.

**BT: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROUTINE?**

Ed Coan: Monday-squat and leg stuff. Tuesday-off. Wednesday-bench and triceps. Thursday-deadlifts and back stuff. Friday-off. Saturday- light bench, shoulders

**BT: YOU DON'T TRAIN MUSCLES LIKE BICEPS?**

Ed Coan: nope, biceps are like ornaments on a xmas tree

**BT: WHAT IS THE BIGGEST MISTAKE LIFTERS MAKE WHEN TRYING TO GET A BIGGER SQUAT?**

Ed Coan: overtraining and bad form

**BT: WHAT IS THE KEY FOR A LIFTER TO ATTAIN A BIGGER SQUAT?**

Ed Coan: train your ass off and perfect your technique.

**BT: ARE THERE ANY ASSISTANCE EXERCISES YOU RECOMMEND FOR A BIGGER SQUAT?**

Ed Coan: pause squats and high bar squats. All forms of the exercise.

**WHAT ABOUT LEG PRESSES OR PYLOS?**

Ed Coan: They have there place but if you squat hard enough you probably won't be able to do leg presses. Pylos will help.

**BT: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE POWERLIFTING MOMENT?**

Ed Coan: Totaling 2402 in Dallas Texas at 218lbs

**BT: GIVE ME 5 FACTORS A LIFTER MUST KNOW TO MAKE GAINS.**

Ed Coan: knowledge, genetics, technique, some nutrition, recovery techniques, hard work and don't overtrain

**BT: WHAT REP RANGE DO YOU NORMALLY FOLLOW FOR SQUATS AND DEADS?**

Ed Coan: 5's 3's 2's

I cycle my training, week by week using lower weights and using more weight over a period of time to peak at a meet

**BT: SO WHAT IS YOUR DIET LIKE?**

Ed Coan: I do make sure I get the nutrition I am supposed to, I just cheat from time to time

**BT: LETS MOVE ONTO THE MENTAL ASPECTS OF TRAINING...**

Ed Coan: ok

**BT: WHAT IS YOUR MINDSET BEFORE APPROACHING A NEW PERSONAL RECORD?**

Ed Coan: I approach it like it's the same as one of my warm-ups. I don't change a thing.

**BT: ED, WHY DON'T YOU CHOOSE TO GO CRAZY BEFORE YOU LIFT HUGE?**

Ed Coan: I don't like to waist all my mental energy. I keep it inside and let it out on the weights.

**BT: BEING OVER 40 WHAT KEPT YOU MOTIVATED TO TRAIN THIS LONG?**

Ed Coan: I listen to my body and believe in pacing myself instead of killing myself. It is hard to hold myself back sometimes but I just need to remember that I will feel better without injuries and lift more in the long run.

**BT: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR THE BEGINNER AND ADVANCED LIFTER?**

Ed Coan: Find your way. Take advice from the guys that came before you, but it's only a guide, not the ten commandments

Advanced lifters have to try new things and do what they know really works. If it aint broke, don't fix it

**BT: WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHAMPION AND AN AVERAGE LIFTER?**

Ed Coan: Mindset. Who really, in their heart wants it

**BT: WHAT IS THE CRAZIEST THING YOU EVER SEEN IN POWERLIFTING?**

Ed Coan: Kirk Karwoski. Hahahahahha

**BT: WHAT MADE HIM SO CRAZY?**

Ed Coan: no attitudes of most powerlifters. Much more camaraderie

**BT: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ALL THE GEAR OUT THERE?**

Ed Coan: I don't really like all the gear, but to each his own

**BT: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THE STEROID DEBATE?**

Ed Coan: It's your life, do what you want. I will not police bedrooms. There are no saints here on earth at this time

**BT: WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE SQUATTING 900LBS?**

Ed Coan: same as 500, but better concentration.

**BT: WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN YOU CRASHED?**

Ed Coan: I knew it was going to tear on the way down, but I couldn't stop it. There was no pain, I was just disappointed and pissed

**BT: HOW DO YOU PREPARE BEFORE A MEET?**

Ed Coan: Making sure I am stretched and iced and get enough nutrition and sleep. I suit up a few weeks before the meet to get a feel for the equipment.

**BT: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGE IN POWERLIFTING?**

Ed Coan: Same rules across the board (fantasy)

**BT: WOULD YOU EVER CONSIDER DOING A STRONGMAN CONTEST?**

Ed Coan: maybe, for the little guys... under 105 kgs. I consider doing one. They are having one this year sometime.

**BT: JESSE KELLUM IS COMING AFTER YOUR TOTAL, ANY COMMENTS?**

Ed Coan: he's not coming after my total. I lifted under a way different set of rules and different federation. It can't be done unless he comes to the USPF.

**BT: WHY DO YOU DECIDE TO STAY USPF WHEN YOU COULD DO BIGGER WEIGHTS IN OTHER FEDS?**

Ed Coan: That's the way I feel it should be done. Others feel different and that's ok

**BT: LETS PLAY THE NAME GAME FOR A MINUTE**

Ed Coan: ok. Humor me

**JAMIE HARRIS**

Ed Coan: Elvis in his later years. He knew when to get out.

**JESSE KELLUM**

Ed Coan: Very intense and does not quit

**GEORGE HALBERT**

Ed Coan: George has not yet hit his best

**BT: DO YOU THINK MARK HENRY IS A BIGGER GENETIC FREAK THAN YOU?**

Ed Coan: No he's just a larger freak in frame

**BT: BRANDON CASS IS A THREAT TO YOUR DEADLIFT RECORD**

Ed Coan: at what weight?

**BT: HE WEIGHS 229 AND PULLED 805. HE IS GETTING STRONGER TOO.**

Ed Coan: He has a long way to go. I wish him the best, but I don't think I know him.

**BT: YOU CAN VISIT HIS WEBSITE [www.cassstrength.com](http://www.cassstrength.com)**

Ed Coan: I pulled 901 at 220 and 887 at 242 and might pull more this year

**BT: DO YOU FEEL YOU COULD SURPASS SUPERHEAVY WEIGHT WORLD RECORD HOLDER ANDY BOLTENS 933 DEADLIFT?, EVEN BEING MUCH SMALLER?**

Ed Coan: Only if I could go sumo again

**BT: WHY CAN'T YOU GO SUMO RIGHT NOW?**

Ed Coan: I tore some things and don't want to risk it again, but who knows?

**BT: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT VINCE ANELLO ANOTHER GREAT DEADLIFTER?**

Ed Coan: he is a very nice man. There are many lifters chasing my deadlift

**BT: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE LABELED THE STRONGEST MAN EVER WITHOUT A DOUBT?**

Ed Coan: some say that, but I am just a regular guy that lifts a lot of weight.

**BT: SPEAKING OF GREAT DO YOU FEEL EVERYONE CAN BE A GREAT POWERLIFTER? CAN JUST ANYONE DEADLIFT 700LBS?**

Ed Coan: No, with mental strength everyone can be strong though. There are plenty of lifters in lower weight classes that are strong as hell. No matter what you can always like the challenge and appreciate the journey.

**BT: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE FIRST TIME YOU LIFTED  
135,225,315,405,500,600,700,800, 900 and 1000lbs**

Ed Coan: it would take too long

**BT: OHHHH**

Ed Coan: hahaha. Just look in my book. I remember the first time I squatted 900, I did 920 at the nationals at 214lbs

**BT: WHERE CAN WE GET YOUR BOOK?**

Ed Coan: quads gym- 708-862-9779

**BT: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR BOOK?**

Ed Coan: it has everything in there... training and some good pics and every meet I was ever in and some commentary on each one

**BT: IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE YOUR GENETICS WOULD YOU STILL BE A POWERLIFTER?**

Ed Coan: I made my genetics work for me. you have to develop them

**BT: LIKE MENTAL TOUGHNESS?**

Ed Coan: I think you were born with some of it but you have to learn to develop lots of it on the way.

**BT: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU HAD THAT YOU DON'T?**

Ed Coan: I wish to be a few inches taller

**BT: HOW WOULD THAT HELP?**

Ed Coan: I would be heavier by about 20lbs.

**BT: OK, LETS CHANGE TOPICS. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE TIME YOU WALKED  
DOWN THE STREETS NAKED WITH O.D WILSON ONE OF THE BIGGEST BLACKS EVER  
IN POWERLIFTING?**

Ed Coan: he was the biggest guy on the beach that day; let's just say that. It was on the beach, not street. We would have been in jail

**BT: WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF ALL THE LITTLE 4'11 95LBS PEOPLE AS O.D. WAS  
WALKING BY, I HEARD THEY RAN AND IT WAS THE FUNNIEST THING EVER**

Ed Coan: Fear. He was a great man. I miss him.

**BT: WAS WILSON THE BIGGEST MAN EVER IN POWERLIFTING?**

Ed Coan: Jeff Lewis weighs more but O.D. was the biggest

**BT: WELL ED, WAS THIS THE LONGEST INTERVIEW YOU EVER HAD**

Ed Coan: Yes by far. I didn't know I had this much patience.

**HAHAHA YOU JUST BROKE ANOTHER PERSONAL RECORD**

Ed Coan: haha Yep

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY?**

Ed Coan: I would like to thank my training partners Brian Schoonveld and Emmett Cunnane. Another guy, Beau started with us. He is a smaller guy with a lot of guts. I couldn't do it without them.

# BODYBUILDER QUINCY TAYLOR

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –May 2006*

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Critical Bench welcomes the biggest man from the 2007 Arnold Classic, Quincy Taylor! Quincy it's great to have the biggest and most muscular monster in the world with us today. I can't wait to learn more about the man behind the monster! Quincy, tell us about yourself.

Quincy Taylor: My name is Quincy Taylor. I was born and raised in Las Vegas. I have been working with weights since I was 12. At the age of 16 I was bench pressing 425lbs at 175lbs.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** That's a huge bench press for any age and any weight, let alone you doing it at 16 and at 175lbs! Quincy, you're the biggest bodybuilder that I have ever seen and I've seen many pros before and nobody even really comes close to you in size in my opinion! You stand out alone as the king of all the freaks! Quincy, the world wonders what the biggest bodybuilder in the world can bench press. So, I must ask the famous question to the world's biggest bodybuilder, "HOW MUCH DO YOU BENCH PRESS?"



Quincy Taylor: My best bench press is 610lbs!

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Very strong! Tell us about your training routine and your diet?

Quincy Taylor: I train with lots of isolation movements. Lots of reps. I make sure the blood gets into the muscles. My rep ranges are usually 10-15 reps and I'm always posing while I am training. I train for an hour and a half to two hours per workout. I also do cardio, where I go on the stair stepper for 45 minutes. I mostly use medium weights.

My Calorie intake is anywhere from 3,000 - 7,000 a day! I eat clean all around. I eat like a normal person who eats healthy I just 5 times more.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Many people believe you were the largest bodybuilder at the 2007 Arnold Classic. Your shoulders were bigger than my head, haha! How big were you?**

Quincy Taylor: I was 6'4 360lbs with LESS than 10% body fat at the 2007 Arnold Classic.



**CRITICAL BENCH: WOW! How big are you now and how big will you be when you are on stage next?**

Quincy Taylor: Right now I am 6'4 340lbs with 5-6% body fat. On stage I will be 325lbs with 3% body fat!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Quincy before you were the biggest monster of all the monsters in the world, how did your bodybuilding journey begin? How did you get started in bodybuilding?**

Quincy Taylor: I grew up in North Las Vegas! In school I was athletic. I played ball, ran track, and did the whole scholastic sports things. However, I always got in trouble. People picked on me a lot. When I was 12, I knocked out a high school SENIOR! I got picked on so much that I had to turn to the weights so I wouldn't beat up and destroy too many people. I'm now happy for the negative things that people said about me because it pissed me off, it motivated me to workout harder and as a result I got bigger and stronger.

After I started lifting weights, a few pro bodybuilders really inspired me. Shawn Ray really inspired me. When I first saw Shawn Ray, he freaked me out! Shawn might have been a jerk at the time, maybe we didn't see eye to eye, but he inspired me and made me want to be a bodybuilder!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Great story! In bodybuilding do you think most of the pros get along and do you see pro bodybuilding like one big family? Or do you see a lot of bad blood in the sport of bodybuilding among the pros?**

Quincy Taylor: Most bodybuilders don't get along. Most bodybuilders like to carry the motto "I'm better than you!" A lot of pros also won't tell me anything! It's a ruthless sport! The only time they will tell you anything is if you pay them!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Despite, the negativity among bodybuilders, you still love bodybuilding. Quincy, what message would you like to give kids who would like to pursue bodybuilding?**

Quincy Taylor: You have to be in bodybuilding because you love it. You can't be in bodybuilding for money or fame because it's totally not worth it! In bodybuilding you don't make money! Golfers and tennis players make more than us! Most of the pro bodybuilders lie about how much they make! Then when their careers end, they don't have dick! They think they are pro football players and they don't make dick!! There are a few rare exceptions like Shawn Ray got his pro card when he was 19 and he had rich parents. Most parents though, won't support you with this crap.

I love this sport because I don't have control over any aspect of my life. There is one thing I have control over and that is I have control over my body. I can make it as big, small, or as hard as I want. You need major/major discipline. That is what I love about it!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Real insightful stuff! Honest as heck! Very cool! Quincy, what adversities have you had to overcome?**

Quincy Taylor: I've had to overcome a lot! I've been through divorces, raising kids, and I grew up with asthma. I've traveled all over the world and I've achieved so many things. I have come a long way!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What are your favorite exercises?**

Quincy Taylor: I love training legs. I love training my quads and my lower back because of my height! Since I'm tall, I need to make sure my core is strong! I know those are the exercises that will hurt, so I always look forward to beating those parts up!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Quincy what are your LEAST favorite exercises?**



Quincy Taylor: You can't ever think negative! You have to think positive all the time! You got to convince yourself in your mind! You got to make you think that you love something! I get sick of people saying "I cant, I don't, I cant, I can't." You can't drink water, I can't eat shit!" "You can't make f\*cking excuses!" I don't f\*cking cheat like that, so shut the f\*ck up! This is business! Do it 180% or don't do it at all! Don't be wishy washy! When people go out and wine and cry about shit, "this sucks, this hurts, f\*ck yes it's going to hurt!!" If you can't take punishment in this life, what are you going to take in the next!?! I PUT THAT OUTLOOK ON EVERYTHING IN LIFE!

Even if I was paralyzed in a wheel chair I would still be moving my finger!

**CRITICAL BENCH: I love it! Still moving your finger! Wishy washy cry babies! hahaha! Quincy, do you think that magazines have ever perceived you in a false light?**

Quincy Taylor: Yes. I mean "Who the f\*ck said I was retiring. I lived the best of my life. They said I'm making a "come back," come back?? I didn't make an f\*cking comeback! I was always here! I get really f\*cking annoyed with human beings sometimes. Certain pros treated me like trash. So I said that I will never treat people like crap because I didn't want to be like some of the other pros. Common, you're getting paid, you're a persona, and if you don't treat others well, you're stupid. I have no patience for bullshit. I'm too old for it. There are too many wishy washing things because too many people are blowing smoke out of their ass!

I love it when magazines say bad things about me. It makes me madder and I train harder and gain that much more!

**CRITICAL BENCH: What has been your favorite bodybuilding moment so far?**

Quincy Taylor: When I won the USA! Every show that I've ever won was a highlight for me. Once you win one, you want to win more. It's a damn HIGH! It's better than drugs! It's better than having 50 orgasms at once!!!!!! We all want to win and there is nothing better in life than actually achieving it.



**CRITICAL BENCH: You have a very interesting mind. What are your tips for the beginner, intermediate and advanced bodybuilder?**

Quincy Taylor: CONSISTENCY! Is the key to the sport and calmness and not allowing other things to interfere! You have to shut out a lot of things and a lot of people in your life to do this sport. There's nothing worse than a guy thinking he is the BEST guy in the world because he has muscles, be honest with yourself! We need to work on something. Sometimes it is emotional and you got to look at yourself and be objective. I learned to look at myself and be objective.

Don't make your main objective to get a contract. There are pros that don't get a contract. You have to be pretty like one of those GAY Abercrombie models to get a contract and most of those guys aren't that damn pretty! So it's racial in some ways. Life is racial, so deal with it and move on!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Where do you stand on the use of steroids and supplements?**

Quincy Taylor: THEY SHOULD BE LEGAL. Do what you want! When it comes teens then it's a no-no! Society doesn't make sense. They want men to be timid, soft mother f\*ckers and then they want people to kill people in their wars! Like little prickly bushes go to the gym to go to Jurassic park! Bodybuilding is like a co-following, a small stick on the mountain! PRO football players are using tons of drugs! It's all a joke and when it comes to teenagers it's a whole different ball game. They want you to have tons of cash to afford it, and it's silly, pro bodybuilders how can you hide? Then someone is at your door and you can't really hide!

Steroids are a waste of tax dollars. Especially when we have guys blowing up buildings. It's just ridiculous... And they want to deal with steroids?!

Tell baseball to drop American sports back to the 1930s and the sales will drop! People want to see freaks and monsters! People want to see freaks and monsters!!

It doesn't matter what you take, how much you take, if you're not working hard or dieting all year, you're going to hurt yourself! People overshadow the hard work and the magazines piss me off because, they cut it off and talk about supplements! That's BS! Bodybuilding isn't about supplements, it's A WHOLE LIFESTYLE. You have to put the years and the time in! There is no special diet, there is no special supplement!

Guys go up to me and say "WHAT THE HELL DO YOU TAKE?!?!" I'm like "Get the "HELL AWAY FROM ME!!!" You're not going to gain... I've been training with weights since I was 12! It requires lots of blood, sweat, tears, and anguish to make the body that I made! When you know that you don't ask dumb questions

**CRITICAL BENCH: I love it! This is really awesome! Off the hook! You're someone who is willing to say what so many people think who don't have the guts to speak out. I wish you were the President of the United States! So, Quincy, what are your future goals?**

Quincy Taylor: Right now I want to keep money in my pocket. I want to get some type of business going some type of fitness! Jaguars/ wont help you ass when your career is over... If you were a jerk, you will hear about it later. Currently I personal train people, I train a few clients in Texas.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How do you see the future of bodybuilding?**

Quincy Taylor: It looks really dark to me! The figures carry the show, not the bodybuilding! Like female figure is taking the show! It's not bodybuilding anymore. The bodybuilding is really dropped because of the talk about the damn drugs! No parent is going to want their kid to be a bodybuilder when there is no guaranteed money and in bodybuilding you're not guaranteed a thing!

We need someone who can get more people involved in the sport. We should have a reality show. Most people don't have a clue of what people do to live the life of a bodybuilding. It's not even remotely a bunch of drugs. To me the drugs are not even a part of whom or what I do.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What keeps you motivated to keep training hard year round?**

Quincy Taylor: I've gone too a rabbits hole... I've gone sooo far that I'm not turning back now! I also love bodybuilding. Bodybuilding is not just who is the biggest on stage but your personality. It's your shape, your color, your depth! It should take place in the whole thing!!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Quincy, in surveys my friends and other weight lifting writers voted you as the freakiest man at the 2007 Arnold Classic! What types of responses do you get from different types of people when they walk past such a giant man beast like you?**

Quincy Taylor: They freak out! They don't know what to say! It's like a tidal wave walking through! Majority of males are intimidated as hell! I could pop their heads like a pimple! That's why I get the kids smile!

People say id be afraid to see you in a dark alley! I'm like "Why would I hurt you, I don't even know you." People tell me how big they want to be! Don't ask dumbass questions! Why would I want to give the tips away for free! People see this as a joke, it's a job!

The females snicker and giggle. Some like my muscles and some don't. Like some people like apples, some like grapes, all depends.

Then there are some people who appreciate all the hard work that I have done. They are the people I remember the most. The people who come up and the people who know my name and have something positive to say!!!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Tell us about your family, what do they think of your bodybuilding success and you being the biggest bodybuilder walking the face of this earth?**

Quincy Taylor: My mom didn't really understand it. As time went on she learned to appreciate it. My kids love it, they like me being as big as I am and that is all that really matters! Anyone who really knows me is those that I care about.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Quincy it has been great talking to you. Now that you have a family and all, would you like to see your kids ever get to be as big as you?**

Quincy Taylor: My kids will be fit. I don't know if they will get into it. How big they get is up to them. I learned not to push them, let them figure out what they want to do. All I insist on is that they take care of themselves and be healthy.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Best of luck with your career Quincy and thanks again for the interview. It wasn't easy chasing you down at the Arnold to get your contact info!**

# DEADLIFT KING ANDY BOLTON

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –December 2008*



*Andy Bolton is the first man and the only man to ever deadlift over 1000lbs! Nobody in the world is even close to Andy Bolton's ability to pull big weight. Many powerlifters feel that Andy Bolton's world record is going to be one of the toughest to beat and we might not see it beat in our life times. Critical Bench was fortunate to go one on one with Andy Bolton in this exclusive Critical Bench Interview.*

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Andy lets jump right to the meat of it, what's your best deadlift?

Andy Bolton: My biggest deadlift is 1003lbs, and the biggest deadlift I have pulled but dropped at the top is 1014lbs

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Andy, you are in a league of your own. I remember a few years back we were talking about the 925 deadlifters like Gary Heisey's record being unstoppable and about the very few other 900+ deadlifters. What are your future goals in the deadlift?

Andy Bolton: My future goals are to increase my deadlift to 1030lbs and make sure my deadlift record can't be touched. I don't ever want to be number 2 again, haha.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Can you tell us a little about your deadlift training routine?

Andy Bolton: My routine is pretty basic and works around explosive power. I try to pull as fast as possible all the time, and deadlift only once a week and lots of work from shin height to work those weak points.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Deadlifters out there make sure your reps are explosive and do top end work! Andy, what supplements do you take?**



Andy Bolton: At the moment I use a full range from cnp professional. I use everything from pro mr to [glutamine creatine](#), joint formula and [multi vitamin](#). Everything really.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Andy before you are about to deadlift 1000+ pounds, what is going through your head?**

Andy Bolton: The one thing I think about is not failing. That scares me the most failing a big lift, and the 1000lb was special to me it was the final lift in a 2 yr plan and I got it. The feeling was amazing.

**CRITICAL BENCH: How did you celebrate after you deadlifted 1003lbs?**

Andy Bolton: Well, as soon as I did it, I did not really understand just how big it was. But when it sunk in, hahaha.. Wow, what a feeling! Haha!

I remember calling my wife saying, "I done it!" I was so choked, I could barley speak, but when we got back to England, I think a few friends and I had a few beers that month ha ha, and no deadlifting for 2 months, my body was wrecked.

**CRITICAL BENCH: I could imagine, wow. How many reps do you think you could have done at the 2008 Olympia Expo with 800lbs? Were you mad when the weights came off the bar?**

Andy Bolton: I had 8 to 10 in mind but the weights coming off only made it more exciting. I don't think it matters what collars you use when deadlifting for reps. The weights always move even in training. I have had weights fall off, no big deal, I enjoyed it though!

**CRITICAL BENCH: Look at the video of Andy deadlifting at the Olympia Expo in Vegas. That was a hardcore moment in powerlifting and one that will go down for the ages! Andy, would you like to do a deadlift rep challenge again?**

Andy Bolton: Yes I would do it again. I really enjoyed it. It was different from a big single and less stress.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Andy do you ever step outside of yourself and do you ever shock scare or amaze yourself with how strong you are?**

Andy Bolton: No, not really. I never think I am strong enough and always want to be stronger, but it's nice knowing that I pulled 1000lbs first! Now that's a feeling. Maybe when I am finished with all this I will look back and say "I was pretty strong, eh." lol.



*Ben Tatar & Andy Bolton*

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Andy, it has been amazing talking to you today. We at Critical Bench congratulate you on your deadlift record breaking news and what you have done for the sport of powerlifting. Andy, we can't wait to see what you have in store for us next. In closing, who would you like to thank?

Andy Bolton: Thank you and I would like to thank my wife and daughter, apisl.com who allow me to focus on my training full time. Special thanks to Brian Batchelder for my training and supplement programs and for being there for me over past 10 years, and the boys from Leeds who I train with thanks lads. I also want to thank Inzer.

# IRON MAN BRIAN BOYLE

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –June 2008*



**Critical Bench:** Critical Bench is here with Brian Boyle right now. Brian Boyle has faced more severe adversities than anyone else I have ever known. He was dead 8 times, in a coma for over 2 months on life support, and has suffered more trauma than anyone else that I have ever known, saw on television or read about before. However, here he is today, successful! He is running faster than most Iron Man Athletes and he bench presses more than the average competitive powerlifter and he is ready to tell us about his story. Brian it is great to have you here with Critical Bench today.

Brian Boyle: Thanks for having me.

**Critical Bench:** Brian, before we get into your intense story, give us some background information about yourself and about what you do!

Brian Boyle: My name is Brian Boyle, I am 21 years old, and I live in Maryland. My background is in swimming and in high school I had a few state championship titles under my belt; I also was nationally ranked in discus, was a champion powerlifter, and had a big interest in bodybuilding. Before the 2007 Ford Ironman World Championship, I didn't have any prior experience in the sport of triathlon.

I think the most I ever ran in a race on the track team was over 200 yards, and as far as cycling, I would ride a mountain bike when I was in middle school in the summer when I would go to my

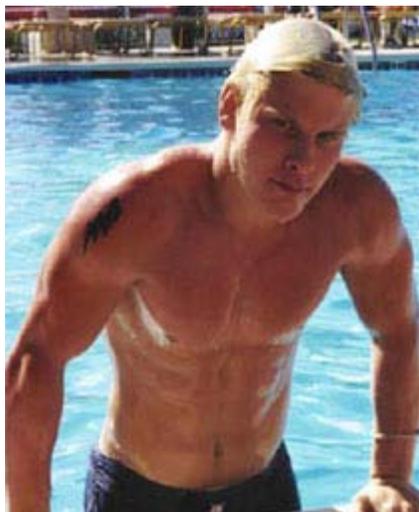
cousins, Matt and Hayley's house, and we would just ride around the neighborhood for fun - that was the closest I ever got to cycling. Even with swimming, the longest race I would do was 100 yards, so a 2.4 miles swim would still be a huge challenge for me even though my background was in swimming.

**Critical Bench: Brian, you were in a fatal car accident! Tell us about that in detail! How did it happen and what do you remember from the event?**

Brian Boyle: A month after I graduated high school in 2004, I was coming home from swim practice and was involved in a very serious car accident with a dump truck. The impact of the crash knocked my heart across my chest, breaking most of my ribs/clavicle/pelvis, collapsing my lungs, losing 60% of my blood, severe nerve damage to my left shoulder, and in a coma on life support for over two months where I died 8 times at Prince Georges Hospital Center in Cheverly, MD.

I don't have a memory of the accident, or the few days before the day of the accident. The first thing that I remember after the collision, which is still so vivid in my mind even today, is being in this very large white tube. In this tube was a boy sitting to my left, and many other boys and girls on my right side (I use the term "boys and girls" because they appeared to be my age); I didn't know why I was there or how I even got there in the first place. The more I sat there, the more I was able to visualize my surroundings. The boy to my left had a cell phone, and he asked me if I needed him to call anyone for me. I told him "yes, can you call my parents and tell them that I love them." The next thing that I remember is waking up in a hospital bed, chemically paralyzed and hooked up to all these machines. Through all the buzzes and beeps going off from the medical equipment that was saving my life at that instant, I could hear my mom and dad telling me in between dramatic pauses of crying hysterically that I was going to be okay. Only moments before I believe I was waiting in line to meet my final judgment, but it must have not been my time. Moments later, I had come back to life. This was just the beginning of my suffering.

**Critical Bench: WOW! Brian, you died almost 8 times? What was that like?? How would you compare the pain of dying almost 8 times to the pain of being an Ironman Triathlete?**



Brian Boyle: As each day went along in my hospitalization period, they said that I was in God's hands; it was unsure whether I would leave my hospital room in a wheelchair or a body bag. In all actuality, I was the worst patient in the unit for many weeks besides those who were on their way to the morgue. I died eight times but each time I was brought back to life only to suffer more. Does suffering end when the body physically dies or when the will to live takes over? I was in room nineteen for over two months, and for those months I was on the brink and slipping fast. In a chemically induced coma, I laid there on my back paralyzed and in a state of total confusion. I woke up not knowing how I got there because of all the medication and amnesia that was given to me.

There I was laid out on a table, screaming, sweating, and barefoot to the floor. I was on drugs that were two-hundred times stronger than morphine, and painkillers that drug addicts would give their lives for. I would go through withdrawals so severe that my body would lose total control and go into convulsions; I would have to hold my legs together in the fetal position for hours so I would stop shaking.

While I was in the intensive care unit and even when I woke up from my coma, I couldn't talk or communicate. As far as the future, it didn't exist. Walking was never going to happen again due to all the extreme injuries and because of the shattered pelvis. The thought of swimming was just that, only a thought. Just like my body, my dreams were shattered, but I never gave up hope because I knew God had some kind of plan waiting for me.

I can honestly say that the one thing that kept me alive from the beginning is what keeps me going today, and that is help and support from my parents, family and friends, they never gave up on me and I can't give up on them. Everything that I do and try and accomplish is for them and because of them. The story is not about Brian Boyle, it is about "Team Boyle" because it takes a team to make a champion.

**Critical Bench: When you were going through the experience did you want to die? What was going through your mind?**



Brian Boyle: It's hard to explain what the experience was like, but I guess the best way is to imagine being hit so hard that your heart is instantly knocked across your chest; bones shattering and snapping in the blink of an eye; lungs collapsing; my life slipping away as each second ticks by; losing consciousness and pints of blood; life forces diminishing; the unimaginable pain; the chemically induced coma for two months; the paralysis; the pneumonia; the infections; the seizures; the routine CAT scans and MRI tests; not breathing for several minutes because the life support tubes clogged; waking up in a room and not knowing where you are and how you arrived there; the feeling of being told that your life was over; looking at your parents standing over your hospital bed and wondering why they are crying their eyes out; not being able to talk or communicate because you have four tubes going down your throat and too weak to raise a finger; having Vaseline spread across your dry eyes because you are not able to blink; being fed through a tube that goes down your nose and watching the liquids go in and out of it; the rubbing alcohol baths; viewing other patients in the intensive care unit rolling by your room with sheets covering their faces; and the indescribable agony of it all. This is what was going through my mind everyday when I was in and out of consciousness.

**Critical Bench: You have experienced everyone's fear and what a strong person you have become! What was the recovery process like from the fatal accident?**

Brian Boyle: It's very easy to go through and list these facts and make it look like everything just seemed to easily fall in it's own perfect little place, but the truth of the matter is that it didn't. It wasn't easy, not then, and not now. The pain and the agony was real and it existed all the way through, in the good times and the very bad. It was not an easy situation to be in where you're laying in a bed, staring at the ceiling, knowing that your life is over. I thought to myself over and over, why this situation had to happen to me. I was always a good kid, received good grades in school, and went to church. Why would something as horrific as this happen to me? Why would God allow this? I went on and on for days asking why? And, then it hit me. All that thinking and pondering on the what-if scenario's and the questionable doubt only stirred up another question - why was I saved? I didn't have anymore questions after that. I know what my purpose in life finally is.

**Critical Bench: How did the accident make you a stronger and better man?**

Brian Boyle: With the 50 year life expectancy I was given from the doctors, I am just trying to live each day to the fullest and motivate and hopefully inspire other people to never give up on their dreams, and to never stop believing no matter how bad a situation is. I remember when I was still in my hospital bed in ICU, I would have my mom and dad push me around in my wheelchair to the other rooms in the unit to see the other patients and talk to them and their families; it didn't matter if the other patients were unconscious or comatose because I just wanted to talk to them, especially since there was always that possibility that they could hear me. I wanted to let them know that everything was going to be okay, somehow things would work out for the best. I prayed with them, I said prayers for them, I tried to give them hope.

**Critical Bench: What lessons did your fatal accident teach you about life?**

Brian Boyle: I find that if I can have a positive impact on at least a few people along my journey back to life, then my mission here in this world will be complete. It's all about a positive attitude, and if you have that, you have everything.

PART 2..... BRIAN SURVIVES..

**Critical Bench: Brian since recovering from the accident, you're even stronger than you were before the accident! Tell us your best lifts? AND how did you get stronger physically after being dead 8 times?**

Brian Boyle: I think the fact that the accident made me mentally stronger gave me the boost to lift bigger weight after I got out of the hospital. As a powerlifter, I always preferred the bench press of the three disciplines and when I was in high school I was able to lift 325 lbs. and after the accident, it went up to 375 lbs. I really believe it comes down to having the right mindset.

**Critical Bench: OMG!!! In what ways does your mind work differently now since then accident? How do you see life differently?**

Brian Boyle: What I have learned about myself throughout this whole ordeal is the old saying that a person has not lived until they have almost died, and for those out there who have fought, life has a flavor that the protected will never know.

**Critical Bench: What you just said Brian wall genius! What is your advice for others who are going through adversity?**

Brian Boyle: "In life, there are going to be times when you fall down, and when that happens, you have to do everything it takes to get back up on your two feet. If the situation is so bad that you can not even lift your body, then at least keep your head up and you will overcome."

**Critical Bench: Brian, what motivates you to keep going strong after you have seen how bad life can really get?**

Brain Boyle: My story is about the recovery and the comeback, but I want to make it much more than that, I want to make a positive impact on the world for both athletes and non-athletes. I am just trying to live each day to the fullest and motivate and hopefully inspire other people through my endeavors to never give up on their dreams, and to never stop believing no matter how bad a situation is.



**Critical Bench: Brian, what are your future goals?**

Brian Boyle: Besides the ironman and triathlons, I'm doing a lot of work now with motivational speaking, the American Red Cross as being a spokes model because I feel that this is how I can use my story as a means of helping others. I have a foundation at my hospital where I am also a spokes model at. I have a biography in the process of being edited/published (Summer '08) right now and following that I have a series of fitness and workout manuals that I'm waiting to get published after the bio is complete. I have a newly established website that just went live last month, but is still under construction, but within the website will be an area for my sponsors, for member and non-members, a blog, photoslideshows, recent t.v. interviews and radio station interviews as well as printed articles, team boyle gift shop, and an area where a viewer can purchase a workout/nutrition plan from me. This is just a few of the things going on but there is a whirlwind of media that has totally turned my life around, but I just want to use all this as a way to help and inspire.

**Critical Bench: Brian, before your huge accident what was your childhood like?**

Brian Boyle; I had a great childhood, my parents were the best. We enjoyed going to the beach and traveling when we could. They have always been there to support me in everything that I do and I wouldn't be the person that I am today if it weren't for them, and honestly, I don't even think I would exist because they brought me back to life when I was giving up in the hospital.

**Critical Bench: Brian, how did you get involved with Iron Man triathalons?**

Brian Boyle: In high school I had three goals after graduating; go to college, swim on the college swim team, and compete in an ironman triathlon one day. I grew up watching the ironman show on t.v. because I was always so amazed at the inspirational stories on there - Team Hoyt, Sister Madonna, Jon Blais, and now Brian Boyle? It just boggles the mind that I have such a fortunate opportunity to be able to tell my story to the world.

It wasn't until this past may where I believed I could even attempt the Ironman triathlon. I really don't know where the idea came from, but it just popped into my mind one afternoon during final

exams week. I was checking my email on the computer, and I went to the Ironman triathlon website and just for laughs, I sent an email to their corporation and told them my story. After I sent it, I forgot all about it because I never thought in a million years that they would even listen to me. It came to my surprise that less than a month later, I received an email from the executive producer of the ironman show with a proposition that I couldn't refuse.

**Critical Bench: How did you manage to bench 325lbs with strict form and compete in triathalons all at the same time? As most people usually pick power sports or endurance sports and excel, but to be great at both is astounding!**

Brian Boyle; Since I left the hospital, I have gained back all the weight (currently 190 lbs.) with the help of weight gainer powders and protein supplements from my sponsors, 4EverFit. The hardest part was learning how to lift weights again with the severe nerve damage in my left shoulder but I overcame the pain and numb sensation, and was able to bench 375 lbs. last year, before I even had the nerve to even think about attempting an Ironman triathlon, and I didn't have 100% full activity yet in my left shoulder.

As for strength training and athletics, I was able to get back in the pool and swim at the collegiate level two years ago. Last year I decided that I would take a break from the team because I wanted to gain some more strength and muscle back so I started powerlifting back up as a hobby. With help and motivational support from 4EverFit, a few champion powerlifters, and my bodybuilding hero and friend, Jay Cutler, I was able to do this. I told Jay my story and how I always looked up to him as a bodybuilder and was a huge fan. He sent me out a care package and put me on this strength training program where I ended up beefing up to 240 lbs. of muscle, which was so much different and better than being the skeleton that I was after getting out of the hospital.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Brian, it has been truly an honor talking to you today. Your story is one of the most inspirational stories in the history of sports of all time. In closing is there a motto you would like to leave us with!..**

Brian Boyle: Live Life Stronger Than Death

# UFC FIGHTER DEAN LISTER

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –March 2009*



**CRITICAL BENCH:** Dean, we all know who you are, an amazing full contact and UFC fighter so I won't even have you introduce yourself to Critical Bench. However, welcome to Critical Bench and it is great to have you.

Dean Lister: Thank you.

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Dean, what is your favorite part about being a fighter?

Dean Lister: My favorite part about being a fighter is having the ability to be able train with so many great athletes. I am also addicted to the competition

**CRITICAL BENCH:** What is your mental training like before a fight? What is going on through your mind before facing your fears before a fight?

Dean Lister: Actually I use to be afraid of fighting when I was a kid but when I was living in Brazil, I started learning jujitsu. After I was getting picked on as a kid, I eventually fell in love with the art and fighting just seemed like a natural progression

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Do you think Bravery was something you were born with or do you think it was something that you learned?

Dean Lister: I think more of it as something you must develop and test. It's all about facing your fears



**CRITICAL BENCH: Do you have a coach or anyone who has helped you overcome your fears? If so, how does he teach you?**

Dean Lister: I have a coach who teaches me to visualize everything from walking to the cage and making every move

**CRITICAL BENCH: Do you feel like you have mastered your mental preparation?**

Dean Lister: I don't think you can ever say that you have mastered being mentally prepared.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Dean, so far in your fighting career what has been the craziest thing that you have gone through?**

Dean Lister: Craziest thing I have gone through is when I first fought Jeremy Horn. I took some Tylenol before my fight and during the fight. I got cut and I was like a waterfall of blood and I found out later that Tylenol thins out your blood so that wasn't a good move on my part

**CRITICAL BENCH: That is interesting. Dean, if you could fight any celeb, entertainer or pro athlete in the world who would you pick and why?**

Dean Lister: Hulk Hogan, so I can say I beat "Thunderlips"

**CRITICAL BENCH: I know this is a no brainer but if you fought Hulk Hogan in a real fight what exactly would happen?**

Dean Lister: I would go after those bum knees. I would stay away from the pythons

**CRITICAL BENCH: What about Andre the Giant or Big Show, would they be tough to take? How would you beat them!**

Dean Lister: I would run until they gassed out and I could lock in a rear naked choke

**CRITICAL BENCH: What about Stone Cold Steve Austin? Would you rather have a WWE match against him or UFC style fight?**

Dean Lister: I would want a UFC Style match at WrestleMania

**CRITICAL BENCH: What entrance music what would you choose and who would go to the ring with you?**

Dean Lister: I would love to have a sweet entrance like The Undertaker. No valet

**CRITICAL BENCH: Would you like to face The Undertaker at Wrestle Mania? And then after they see you beat Hogan and the Undertaker the REST of the world will believe that they can if they learned how to fight from you!**

Dean Lister: No, he is too cool. I met him at Brock's first UFC fight with Stone Cold and they actually knew who I was which kind of gave me a big head for a few minutes

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was it like meeting the Undertaker and Stone Cold?**

They are cool as hell. I grew up watching The Undertaker and Stone Cold. They just look like the guys who would beat his boss's ass. Very cool guys

**CRITICAL BENCH. Speaking of Brock Lesnar, he is the UFC Champion. How would he fair against Fedor?**

Dean Lister: I think when you have the power that Brock has you can't help but think he has to be top 2 to possibly beat Fedor.

**CRITICAL BENCH: What WWE guys would be great for UFC and what UFC guys would be great for WWE?**

Dean Lister: I think Bobby Lashley would be good in UFC because he is a NCAA champion wrestler. I definitely would like to see Tito Ortiz in the WWE.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Would you rather see Tito Ortiz in the WWE or UFC?**

Dean Lister: WWE so I can see Tito in that light.

**CRITICAL BENCH: Who has been your toughest opponent thus far?**

Dean Lister: I have to say it was Okami



**CRITICAL BENCH: What would you say has been your toughest fight?**

Dean Lister: With Nate I got caught with a knee in the first round and I don't remember the fight from that point on. I was on auto pilot and survived

**CRITICAL BENCH: When you look back at that moment do you remember it as more powerful and important than just basic happy/peaceful moments that most people experience at some point?**

Dean Lister: You always feel you are under a microscope so it magnifies things more I think

**CRITICAL BENCH: Tell us about your DVD that is now out!**

Dean Lister: It is actually my second DVD and this one follows me throughout Europe as I was touring with the band KORN. It's more of a documentary of the life of a friend of a famous band more than anything.

My first DVD was a little more instructional. I go over some moves with various coaches and fighters on my first trip to Europe. You can see clips at [www.deanlister.com](http://www.deanlister.com)

**CRITICAL BENCH: What was your favorite fight so far?**

Dean Lister: I really enjoyed my rematch with Horn. I submitted him in the 2nd round. When I won the KOTC title and also when I made my debut against Sakara who was touted as the next big threat to Chuck. I submitted him in the first

**CRITICAL BENCH: Dean, what is your advice for everyone out there so they can be the best?**

Dean Lister: Always believe in what you are doing and train with as many people as possible so you can learn different techniques

**CRITICAL BENCH: Dean, you get along with all fighters. Most people can't. How do you do it?**

Dean Lister: I always offer to teach guys anything I can and in return they do the same





**CRITICAL BENCH:** Here is a good question for you, if you fought during the early days of the UFC do you think you would have won? Do you think you would win all the past UFC tournaments and have an undefeated record like Royce Gracie?

Dean Lister: I would have a great shot that's for sure

**CRITICAL BENCH:** Well, Dean it has been great talking to you today. We wish you all the best with your fighting ahead and looking forward to seeing more of you on TV.

Thanks for the interview.

# POWERLIFTER MIKE SCHWANKE

*Interviewed by Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com –October 2008*

Before starting this interview I would like to congratulate Mike Schwanke for winning the 2007 Tampa Barbell Invitational. The full power meet was APF sanctioned and the winner was based on lift coefficients. Mike recorded a 925 squat, 680 bench, and a 745 deadlift for an amazing 2350 total at 219.5 lbs.



My name is Mike Westerdal and I have been fortunate enough to train beside Mike Schwanke for a couple of months now at [Tampa Barbell](#). Mike busts his butt in the gym every practice and motivates everyone else to do the same. He's very team oriented, passionate about the sport, and extremely intense. I'm honored to do this interview with him and introduce "Breaker" to the powerlifting world. If you haven't heard of him yet stay tuned, he's just getting warmed up.

**Critical Bench: Mike your powerlifting resume is just fantastic and the numbers speak for themselves! You're numbers are right there with the super heavyweights. Awesome job! So, tell us about yourself.**

Well my name is Mike Schwanke "aka Breaker" I am 29 years young and now residing in Tampa FL. I have been weight training since High School and I have always have enjoyed strength related sports. I have served over 10 years in the military now, I had dual service time six being Army and four in the Air Force. I am currently a Satellite Systems Shift Supervisor and

just finished my tour in Korea. Life has always been very fast paced for me, but I will admit it certainly keeps things interesting and always presenting me with new challenges.

There are many things I enjoy in life, but top on my list is weight training / powerlifting. I truly appreciate the hell out of this sport and have meet and trained with some truly inspirational people. I have been extremely fortunate to have trained with many pro level athletes and also huge reason behind my own success. Currently I train at [Tampa Barbell](#) and it is by far the best barbell club I have trained with to date! We have a great group of guys there and they are all about promoting team success, not just individual!



**Critical Bench: For the most part powerlifting is an individual sport, but requires the help of training partners. How important do you think quality training partners are?**

They mean everything and are a vital part in the equation of success, you need them to motivate and coach you to success! You need this and it is quite simple people that you can count on and will be there when you need them, now that to me is quality.

**Critical Bench: What has powerlifting taught you about life?**

For me it taught me to focus my attention to one certain set of goals and not to be so easily distracted in achieving them

**Critical Bench: What drives or motivates you to the best lifter you can be?**

Personnel desire and training with the best; you automatically want to be where they are at and they will be pushed to stay on top of their game.

**Critical Bench: Does your family understand and support your training?**

No and it really does not matter if they did, this is something that I alone wanted to participate in not them.

**Critical Bench: What are your best lifts?**

So far my best lifts have been 925lb Squat, 680lb Bench, 755lb Deadlift and a 2350lb Total.

**Critical Bench: Amazing. What got you started in powerlifting?**

Well to be honest I was one fat out of shape kid "lol" I wanted to get all buff so I could get all the hot chicks. Well not all of us can be Mr. Universe, but I did find out we all have gifts hidden in the most obscure places. I really started to buckle down in High school with my weight training, back then I was a mere 162lb when I graduated. I did have a 335lb Raw Bench and a respectable 275lb Clean and Jerk. I would soon enter the Army and my lifting would soon be on the back burner for a while and just due to the nature of what the Army expects physically.

By 2003 I just really had enough of the Army and really did like the path I was on. Also my last Platoon Sergeant was a real worthless piece of shit and was really not a good situation anyone! So I bailed the hell out and tried to play the job market which was terrible at the time; but when bad things happen, good things are around the corner! Met a good friend [Joey Smith](#) at the local gym and started to take our training off from there.



*Mike Schwanke Pulls 755 at the 2007 IPA Cincy Pro-Am*

**Critical Bench: Interesting. What advice would you give to someone that has lifted weights in the past but wants to get involved in the sport of powerlifting?**

Talk and train with people that know what the hell they are doing!

**Critical Bench: What are your future goals?**

I would love to squat a Grand, hit a 700lb bench and pull 800lb. Nothing in this world is free nor comes easy, but I am more then willing to put in my time and make these goals happen!

**Critical Bench: What kind of bench shirt do you use and why did you choose it?**

I first started off with double denim which I also had no idea how to use the damn thing, so after taking 500 in the face I finally started to listen to the voice of reasoning in my head. Since I am a

long limbed lifter the denim does not fit my picticular lifting style or body frame, so with some research and a few trips to ECBB I switched to a poly design and took everything ground zero.

**Critical Bench: Have you faced any adversities in your training?**

Yeah dealing with the Militaries idea of what fitness is, if you're in this sport and having to bust your ass running they tend not to mix. Additionally with the added stress in doing grass drills and training heavy with weights you will be well on your way to road of injury. I never have a problem running and do enjoy to some extent, But running 6+ miles is just fucking stupid to me and thank Christ the Airforce has leaders with common sense.

**Critical Bench: You were in the Army for 6 years and then the Airforce. Which experience was more extreme and what was each experience like? Was being in the Airforce or Army as extreme as power lifting?**

Oh boy! OK It has been a great transition in my life and I am not going to bash the Army too harshly. But the Army treats you more like a number vs. the Airforce treats you like a member. I really enjoy my job and taking care of our Airman in the worlds best Airforce, for me there is no greater honor. One thing I must say about the Airforce it is very education demanding and they put great emphasis on it. Likewise it has also put me about 5 classes away from getting my associates degree; so once again I win with the Blue. Now anyone going to join the Military do not take my opinion as the gospel, I have my ideas and they are just that "Mine"! All I can say is the 3-D's "do what you want to do and do it well"!



*Mike getting ready to squat 870.4 pounds.*

**Critical Bench: Tell us about your powerlifting routine and diet?**

Well I am a real supplement nerd; I take all your basics supplementation and nothing requiring rocket science. However I have learned how to cycle supplements almost too absolute perfection and I believe this has made a night and day impact with my progress! One thing I will say is to be creative, but at the same time keep it simple! Basic [multivitamin](#) and [protein](#) is a great start for any athlete who is pushing there body and needing that enhanced recovery time. Everyone has the general idea you have to make protein in shakes and why is that; think outside the box and make protein pancakes, hell even coffee creamer.



Lastly for beginners read what the hell you are taking if it says, take 1-2 scopes that does not mean 5! There is a reason why it is 1-2 scopes; just like eating would you eat 8 pieces of chicken at one time or spaced throughout the day? The answer is throughout the day and the reason why your body only processes 40-60 grams of protein and hour!

**Critical Bench: Good advice and so true. I'm going to name some people and tell me what it was like training with them.**

**Tommy Fannon -**

He has been a great friend and in my opinion one of the greatest coaches I have ever met. He lives, dreams and breathes this sport and allows you to use his experiences for your benefit. Tommy will do anything to help anyone to become better and most importantly to become a smarter lifter.

**John Cena WWE Professional Wrestler -**

This is actually a funny story a good friend of mine was working at Life Style Family Fitness in Tampa. I was coming down to visit him one weekend and he said he had a workout planned for me, naturally I said sure. So I get there and thinking that we were going to hit the weights, and all of a sudden John Cena comes walking and my buddy says "here is your training partner for today!" I will say this John is a supper cool guy and very down to earth and I also picked up some nice Body Builder routines from him!

**Critical Bench what training philosophy do you think is the best? What are your pet peeves when it comes to the gym?**

Be open minded to new ideas and take constructive criticism from experienced lifters. Be on time and never make excuses for your own mistakes it's just part of learning. Lastly always be humble and not some ego-jackass people will only hate you for it and sooner or latter it will cause your downfall.

**Critical Bench: You have helped a lot of people get better including myself. How does helping a beginner, intermediate and an advanced lifter differ?**

I try to give back from what I have taken and truly believe that is what separates our sport from the rest! Different levels lifters are both either easy or difficult to help and coach in the right direction.

The Beginner Lifter: This is just what it is a beginner, you have to help them ground up and invest some time in them!

The Intermediate Lifter: have some knowledge but still making small mistakes, but in my opinion the easiest to help and steer them in the right direction!

The Advanced Lifter: This is truly a double edge sword the lifter will both be awesome and teach you a thing or two. Or they will be making petty mistakes due to pride and so not take very well to criticism.

Lastly keep in mind that the coach can always be the student and we are always learning.

**Critical Bench: What kind of training schedule do you follow? Do you incorporate boards, bands, chains, speed days? What's your favorite assistance exercise?**

I use a hybrid split method consisting two days of powerlifting and two days of body building. I use the hell out of bands and chains with a few speed days, boards have there place but only for CNS work. My philosophy is this if you squat high all the time in your training and meet time comes around then you try to hit parallel. I bet it will be very difficult and you most likely bomb out of the meet. The same goes for boards in my opinion if you always doing 2-4 boards in your training and let's get say hypothetically you can hit 750lb off a 2 board. If you only do this type of training and never take a weight to your chest, when meet roles around you can bet that same 750lb will own your ass and you will bomb out of the meet! Keep in mind that I am a three lift competitor so I do not bench twice a week. Not bashing training methods by any means, but stating what had and is working for me.

**Critical Bench: What makes you different from the other lifters?**

I would say one being Military, I am restricted to weight standards and have to run and have to do the whole total physical concept. Second I would say drive and dedication in willing to achieve my goals and always wanting to be a better lifter.

**Critical Bench: How do you see the future of benching?**

Simple answer the numbers will only get more insane and the bar to get set higher and higher each year.

**Critical Bench: What do you think about the new AFPF federation? Do you feel there are too many feds or do you welcome more competition?**

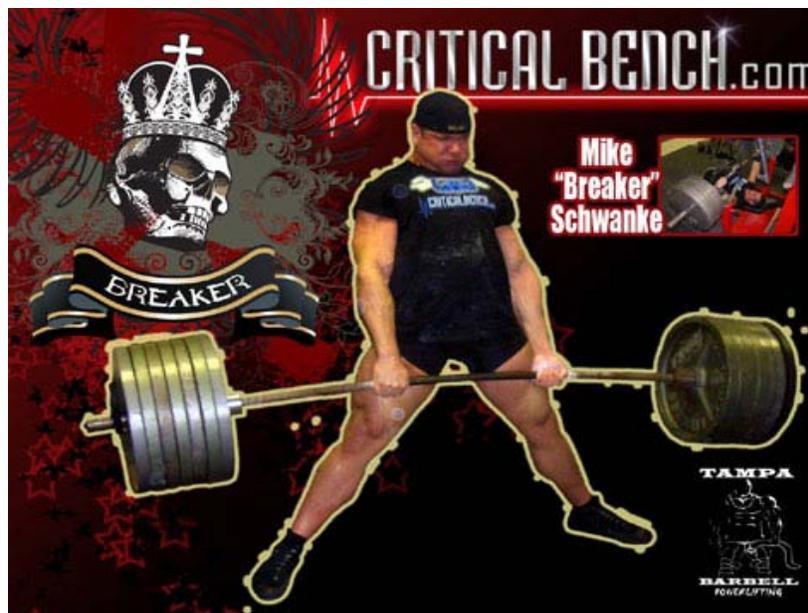
No I do not welcome it we already have enough federations and just making one more just puts us that much farther away from grace. I say fix the problems where they are at vs. spawning new federations and keep this sport from becoming even a bigger clusterfuck.

**Critical Bench: Thanks for the interview and the insight Mike. Appreciate your time and wish you the best in your future meets. In closing is there anyone who you would like to thank or any final words of wisdom?**

First and foremost: I would like to thank the service members of our Armed Forces deployed throughout the world. I personally thank you for what you are doing and for the sacrifices you do in your daily lives!

Second: I was once under this magical elusion that a double ply bench shirt would = 600lb+ bencher. I got a news flash for everybody that also believes this your wrong! It now has been 3 years using equipment and I am still learning new tricks with every workout. I see many internet jockeys bashing lifters and the whole raw vs. equipped is just fucking stupid. First off the hating must stop; I have not one problem in admitting somebody is better then me. Mater of fact there is always someone who will be better then you and it's a good thing it keeps you from being complacent. But likewise there are standards and they must be enforced in competition, if the lift is questionable and it gets flamed then it was well deserved.

I would like to thank all of my training partners past and present. Tommy Fannon, Blaine Stussy and all the members of [Tampa Barbell](#), [Alan Thomas of APT Pro Gear](#), [Joey Smith](#), Rodney Coates & [Barry Williams](#), Granite City Barbell, Chris Smith & Joe Deverville of [Sci-Fit Nutrition](#) in Macon GA. Reggie Felty, Jason Powell, Robert Hames aka the Korea Crew, Paul Wolford and [CriticalBench.com](#) for taking the time interview and post my story! In addition I'd also like to thank [Inzer Advanced Designs](#)



# FOOTBALLER POWERLIFTER CHRIS JANEK

*Interviewed by Ben Tatar of CriticalBench.com –January 2008*



Chris Janek, is one strong dude! He has bench pressed 585lbs raw, pressed 200lbs dumbbells for sets of 12, benched 315 for 27 reps and 405 for 14 reps. He has [totaled Elite at his powerlifting meet](#) in Dec 2007 at the SPF Record Breakers. What makes Chris Janek's accomplishments even more amazing is that he is a professional football player for the Utah Blaze Arena Football and only gets a chance to train for powerlifting during the off-season. Is Critical Bench giving you the first glimpse of this future powerlifting star?

**1) Critical Bench: Chris, welcome to Critical Bench! It's great to have you here. Tell us about yourself!**

I began lifting my sophomore year in high school with lots of heavy weight and bad form. During my sophomore year of high school I squatted 500 and benched 350. I went from 235lbs to 260lbs my junior year. I played football all through high school and I wrestled in the heavyweight division. I got all state my senior year in football and wrestling two years.

I went on to play at the University of Wisconsin playing nose guard all years. I went straight to college and played as a true freshman. I played every year and started 2 years. After my senior year I had a tryout for the Cleveland browns that didn't pan out and neither did any other NFL teams so I went on to the arena football league. This upcoming season will be my 8th season. I am now married to my beautiful wife Danielle and have two kids (Reide and Roman). I always

have lifted heavy and decided this year to put something on paper. [Steve Konopka AKA KONO](#) and I played this year together in Utah and got to know each other well and he said that he and Mike would sponsor me to do a meet.

I am 6'1 (6'2 on a good day) about 315lbs and just turned 30. I have just totaled elite in powerlifting.



**2) Critical Bench: Chris, that's quite an accomplishment to total elite at your first meet. A lot of people work their whole lives to total elite and never do. What do you contribute your success to?**

I didn't really focus or know what elite was until a few guys told me about it this off season. My total would have been higher if I didn't jump from 900 to 1000 on the squat and if I had practiced dead lifts. The one thing i contribute to the success in the meet is [criticalbench.com](#) ! I never would have done the meet if Critical Bench never asked.

**3) Critical Bench: When you retire from football do you plan on competing more often?**

Whenever I retire form football, I definitely plan on doing more meets. Right now I can only train heavy for 4 months out of a year so when I can truly focus and get used to all the suits and shirts, I feel like I will actually compete with some of the best.

**4) Critical Bench: What are you best gym lifts?**

For gym lifts, I have done:

1. 170 dumbbells sitting military for 5 reps
2. front squat 531 x 1,
3. 405 seated military press
4. 585lbs raw bench press
5. raw squat (belt wraps 850)
6. 200 lb dumbbell flat bench x 12,
7. 200 lb dumbbell shrugs and I go over 800lbs on barbell shrugs
8. I use the whole stack on all sorts of equipment



**5) Critical Bench: That is sick! You're strength is out of this world. How many times can you rep out 405 pounds? What about 225 and 315?**

I can bench press 405 - 14 times!

I can bench press 315 - 27 times!

For 225, I blow out of steam at 44 reps. I suck and hate reps. I taped the 315 and I'll have it on film. I plan on benching 225 for 50+ next time I try and next time I do 405 for reps, I'll tape it and send it in to you guys.

**6) Critical Bench: Awesome! Keep us posted on your incredible rep feats. How did you prepare for the meet? You must train differently for football and powerlifting?**

My training partner and I prepared for the meet by driving 30 miles away to get tips from Putt Houston and his boys at power body USA and Rivers edge YMCA in my hometown with Rick Fowler and his boys. As far as the equipment goes, I got my squat suit in form elitefts.com (those guys kick ass!) As for the bench shirt, I used the bench shirt 3 times prior to the meet.



**7) Critical Bench: You scored a TD last year against Orlando . How did that feel? Did you have the celebration planned out waiting for that chance to display it?**

The 4th quarter touchdown I got last year really helped us win the game. I tried to do the robot dance in the end zone but it looked more like some sort of spasm. Running 50 yd at the end of a game with adrenaline takes it out of you.

**8) Critical Bench: How well do you think Utah will do this upcoming football season?**

The Utah blaze should do a lot better than last year. I'm not one for giving another team fuel but we loaded up probably more than anyone especially on the defensive line.



*Chris Janek Has the QB in his grasp!*

**9) Critical Bench: If you could train for powerlifting year round how do you think it would reflect on your total?**

If I could train year round, I think I could really compete with the best. Over the next year, I'm going to focus on getting use to all of the equipment. This year I got 2255 and next year I want 2450 to 2550.



**10) Critical Bench: What has been your most intense experience in bench pressing, football and life?**

My most intense experience with bench pressing has to of been the day I did 315. I can remember as a kid always being amazed at the older guys doing that and it blew my mind. Football- probably winning two rose bowls back to back. And life- birth of my son.

**11) Critical Bench: What is your favorite thing about powerlifting? What about football?**

My favorite thing about powerlifitng and football is the competition.

**12) Critical Bench: What is your advice for kids who would like to succeed in football, powerlifting, and in life itself?**

Surround yourself by good coaches. I have had the privilege of having great strength coaches such as John Dettman ( Wisconsin) Chris Doyle IOWA ), Tony Federico (Colorado state now Colorado crush) Lindsey Hassell (San Jose State and now Utah blaze) [Joe Defranco](#) (Parisis school of speed and strength now owns his own business,) and locally Rick Fowler, Tate mertin, Putt Houston and Jeff Lewis.

**13) Critical Bench: What separates you from everyone else?**

The one thing that separated me from everyone else is I'm going to work harder than you to get what I want.



**Critical Bench: Sounds like a challenge! You're gonna be tough to beat, Chris! It has truly been a pleasure interviewing you. Is there anyone who you would like to thank?**

Joe Defranco probably doesn't remember me but he had one of the biggest influences on my lifting. When i played arena in New Jersey for the Gladiator we trained at Paresis's school of speed and strength and I approached him on ideas. He turned me on the the west side barbell way of training. It opened my eyes and has helped me in all aspects of lifting. I really appreciated him for that. I always check out his site for ideas.

