

Power Couple

RMLC, home of Colorado's "Power Couple," Dan and Jen Gaudreau

This interview took place at Rocky Mountain Lifting Club, aka RMLC in Aurora, CO. It's an hour and thirty five minute drive for me, so I train here when I can, but not consistently. I like the punch card system, and am glad that it's offered. There are many top lifters in Colorado who train here and the owners, Dan and Jen Gaudreau, are both world class lifters in the USAPL and the state chairs for that federation. Besides competing, they run at least two, and sometimes four, meets per year. The club used to be in a larger space literally a stones throw from the current one, but a commercial lessee offered seven times RMLC's lease rate, so they quickly had to move and ended up in a space that is considerably

smaller. They have a ton of more equipment in storage and are negotiating for a much larger building near here. At the time of this interview, Dan had just flown back from England where he took the IPF superheavy bench title at 675#, single ply. Jen is prepping for USAPL Womens Nationals, May 16-18, in Baton Rouge, LA.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN LIFTING CLUB



Located in Aurora, CO, RMLC is dedicated to helping both competitive and recreational strength and power athletes of all ages and levels reach their highest potential.

How old are you two and what do you do?

Dan - I'm 53 and I'm self-employed in an electrical contracting/construction business.

Jen - I'm 42 and teach first grade at a nearby elementary

school. We've been married eight years and have a 7 year old son. Of course, we also train and run this gym, so we're busy! It's a code entry system at the door, so we don't have to be here all day,



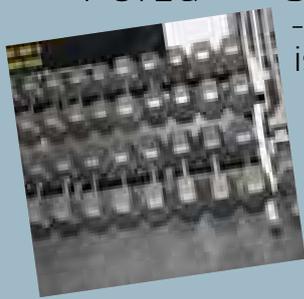
"WE WOULD LIKE TO EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO HAVE THIS BE OUR FULL TIME OCCUPATION"



WHAT IS IN THE GYM

RMLC is number one in training because both owners are world class lifters and to stay that way, they have world class equipment.

A partial list includes a glute/ham machine, reverse hyper, every kind of bar, bands, and Forza benches - this place is loaded!



LOCAL MEETS

RMLC, hosts several local and state meets.

They will be hosting the IPF raw nationals in July, and the IPF Worlds in November.



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How did you two meet?

D - Through powerlifting! I dropped off a meet form for her at the club where she was working. I said "hi," and then a mutual friend suggested to her that she enter the meet I was having. She started training at the original RMLC and it just kind of went from there. She's from Louisiana and was going to move back when Katrina hit. She put her plans to move on the back burner, we got more involved, and here we are. I wouldn't have met my wife, we wouldn't have our son, if it wasn't for powerlifting! The USAPL, RMLC - it's like a big family to us.

How long has RMLC been in business?

D - Since 2004. This is the third gym under that name and we're hoping that the 12,000 square foot facility we're negotiating for will be the last move. I like Aurora, so the gym will always be in Aurora. We have a good relationship with the city and we've partnered with VisitAurora, which sponsors Aurora Sports Festival. Powerlifting is growing through that.

Dan, Jen, what are your best lifts in the last year in a meet?

J - Squat is 396, bench 231, and deadlift 385. I lift in the 137.5# class, and lift single ply.

D - I'm 6'1", 340. My best bench was just 5 days ago in England at 675. My best recent squat was 805, and best deadlift was 672, sumo. These were all single ply, and I was tested at the meets where they were done. I've pulled 725 conventional and 700 sumo a few years ago.

Why the switch from conventional to sumo?

D - I was heavier at the time, and to get my legs inside my arms for

conventional, it would cause my arms to be out at an angle, so I'd have to pull farther. I bit the bullet and it took about three years to catch up to my old conventional lift. I haven't exceeded my conventional lift, but I just like sumo now, so I'll stick with that. My first sumo meet had an Okie deadlift bar on the platform, but not in the warmup room. I went out to the platform, and the bar slack came up about 2". I almost went face first into the audience, it was so different!

Have you always been a USAPL guy?

D - I lifted in a couple other drug free feds, but the national or world meets just weren't at what I thought were appropriate venues. The competition wasn't there, rules were lax and they claimed to be drug free, but no testing was actually done. They can claim to be drug free, but show me your list of suspended lifters and the list of people you've actually tested. USAPL publishes this list, and their top guys are tested. No second chances, no collusion to hide it, you pass or fail. Period. We had a top level bencher fail for cannabis (marijuana), and he didn't get the record. It was taken from him, and he was suspended for 6 months.

I have a hard time imagining how smoking pot would help any powerlifter. "Like wow, dude, that's some heavy lookin' weight. Got any Cheetos?"

D - The thing with the IOC banned substance list, it's for all sports, not just for powerlifting. Target sports, like archery and marksmanship, sedatives and beta blockers can slow your heart rate down and by being calm, increase your performance in that sport. There are therapeutic use exemptions, but you have to apply for that exemption. Now take hormonal therapeutic use - the testosterone patches, creams, those will never be allowed. Not going to happen. IOC will tell you you can take it, you just can't compete

in our sport. It opens up a Pandora's box if it's allowed. Hard decisions have to be made. You think my wife, who has had cancer and surgery for it, couldn't benefit from hormonal therapy? She sure could, but she's made the decision that she wants to compete in a rigidly tested federation, so she doesn't do it.

Suppose there's a guy in his sixties on HRT – he feels better, thinks that just having a level of testosterone that's normal for his age isn't cheating. Could he not get HRT, say a few weeks before a meet, and pass the test?

D - USAPL also does random, out of meet testing, so he'd fail that. It doesn't matter what his level is or should be, the test detects extraneous testosterone. That's the basis of all steroid testing. The TE ratio is off if you take extraneous testosterone. They can also detect metabolites and traces of particular substances.

Who's the board or committee that decides all this?

D - The board is made up of international and national MDs and sports professionals. The US division caught the biggest cheater of all – Lance Armstrong. It was all because one guy at the IOC in Colorado Springs decided to really go after him and not give up. For years, Armstrong bought his way out of situations, bullied people, but he was cheating, and it was ultimately proven.

What do you think of CrossFit?

J - If it's done correctly, it's great, but often the coaching leaves a lot to be desired.

D - They'll get a 40 year old housewife who's never really trained, and first day, they'll have her doing a max in power clean – either a one rep or rep set for a max. Lots of new trainees get hurt this way. The good thing is

that it exposes a lot of people to powerlifting, but these lifts should be approached gradually. We're hoping that CrossFit contracts with USAPL to teach good form and technique, through USAPL certified coaches. I've heard that steroid users have taught CrossFit seminars saying, "If you're not cheating, you're not competing." It's crazy, getting recreational lifters on steroids! Most beginning or intermediate lifters that come in here need major form revision, but once they get their form down, their lifts start going up.

You're the Colorado state chair for USAPL, and you're hosting the IPF world meet here in November. How many lifters do you expect?

D - There will be about 250, open class, men's and women's. Everyone lifting either has to win their countries nationals, or be nominated by their country. Some country's just send their best, regardless of qualifying totals, kind of like the Olympics.

How long do you think you'll be powerlifting?

D - I always say that powerlifting is a sport you can take with you your whole life. There are always bench only meets, or push pulls if you can't squat.

J - This is my 24th year of powerlifting and I still love it!

D - I'd love to be like Tom O'Keefe, a competitor that trains here. He's 78, 181# class, does all 3 lifts, and just pulled almost 400. You won't see people actually getting better in any other sport except this one. In most sports, by the time you're 26 or so, you're done.

How about high school powerlifting?

D&J - Colorado is kind of behind the curve. The best

QUALIFICATIONS



Dan is a certified coach with both USA Powerlifting and USA Weightlifting organizations and conducts coaching certification seminars on-site. Jennifer is also a certified club coach with USA Powerlifting.

“WE’RE HOPING THAT CROSSFIT CONTRACTS WITH USAPL TO TEACH GOOD FORM AND TECHNIQUE”

high school football teams in the country are in Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. All these schools have powerlifting teams and the football players wouldn't think of not powerlifting. Texas is a big state, but there are probably 6,000 girls that powerlift in that state. Louisiana, just because it's next door to Texas, copies them and has a disproportionate number of excellent high school teams, just because they powerlift. Not one pro or college team doesn't powerlift, so sooner or later it will trickle down to the high school level nationwide. Wisconsin's high school meet gets 400 kids, and Louisiana's high school state meet was one day, running 8 platforms continuously. Every high school in TX, LA, PA, and WI has a powerlifting team as a competitive sport.

You both work full time, run this gym, train and compete, and put on 4-7 meets per year. How do you manage it?

J - We both have our specialties when it comes to running meets. Getting equipment to the venue, ordering and printing T-shirts, loading the scoring software, organizing meet help and feeding them, ordering awards – there's a lot to it, but we get it done.

D - We're both involved in the sport, so there's empathy for each other. Our vacations revolve around powerlifting meets, even if just one of us is competing. If it's out of the country, it's a long flight there and we usually sit in the judges chair for a day or two, weigh in, compete, coach and cheer teammates, and then I have to get back to run my business. We never get to go on a safari or castle tour, or whatever. We're going to try and work more of these things in. People say, "Wow, you get to travel," but it's not all it's cracked up to be.

Do you bring your son to these meets?

J - Not yet, we haven't. Neither of our parents live in Colorado, so we fly in one or the other, and we have the best child care, and they get to see their grandson. Our quality family time is here at the gym. Logan isn't parked in front of the TV or computer, but interacts with our powerlifting family, and it's good for him.

Do you know of any other "power couples" who both train, compete, and own a gym?

D - There are a few, but for most of them their gym is their livelihood, and I can't think of any that run meets on top of all of that, like us. I had to open this gym just to be able to train. Most gyms don't like chalk or deadlifting. I have to squat in a rack that lets me get my hands all the way out on the bar, and no gym had those. I opened the gym 10 years ago and never looked back. Jennifer came along, we got married and she started helping me

immediately... it's our life now.

J - My dream would be for Dan to run the gym full time. Right now, it's surviving. We're not like other gyms that try and sign people up for a year and then hope that they never show up again. People that sign up here are serious and use the gym 3 or 4 times a week. We're here to help them and make them better. If this is never financially successful, that's okay too, because this is what we love. It's never, "oh no, we have to go to the gym tonight". We get to train with our powerlifting family, we get to help people; it really is our passion. This isn't our hobby. We understand this about each other.

Jen, how did you get involved in powerlifting?

J - My mom bought me a 90 day membership to a gym in my senior year of high school, complete with a trainer who happened to be a powerlifter. I liked training, so when I went to Louisiana Tech during orientation, a friend of mine said, "let's look at the powerlifting team. You lift weights, you might like it". Billy Jack Talton, the best coach ever, invited me for a workout and I never left.

Do you think the sport of powerlifting will ever be unified?

D - No. Other countries have just one federation and they're okay with that. In America with the free market system, anyone can start their own federation, with their own rules, and run it for profit.

And yet, in a free market system, which powerlifting is, you must be able to compete to survive, offering what people want, and many federations do this. Whether it's raw, multi-ply, monolifts, testing (or not), rational people will make their own decisions regarding lifting choices.

D - I have to break off on the steroid issue, because that's an illegal activity.

On the way to this interview, I exceeded the speed limit a little on the highway. Even though there are laws regarding speeding, I weighed the consequences of breaking the law, determined that no one would be injured by my actions, and went 74 in a 70 mph zone.

D - Sometimes an outside influence is needed. I understand the libertarian position, but we're not talking about minor traffic offences, we're talking about felony activity and taking steroids is a felony. It's a crime.

DAN AND JEN



"We're here to help you and make you better!"

As long as males are males they will seek an edge over other males.

D - I understand why pro athletes do it where millions of dollars are involved, but I don't know anyone who's getting rich by competing in powerlifting. The IOC code covering drug use covers all sports. Why hasn't the NFL or NBA adopted the IOC code? Because there's money involved. In pro football, you're alerted when you're going to be tested, wink, wink. One of my visions, if I ever get to higher office in USAPL, will be a serious attempt at unification among federations that are almost identical in philosophy with USAPL. The differences in drug tested feds are very minor. I would try to negotiate with these feds to merge. WABDL, for example, is a push pull deal, and I appreciate that. They have a niche and more power to 'em. The drug using feds, that may come down to legislation. There are people drafting legislation in several states that would make any strength sport in that state required to be drug tested. You don't think the lawmakers wouldn't go for that? "No, I'm all for drug use in sports". Of course they'd pass it. After that happened, steroids would be pushed out of this country. I think that the first state to do it might pass it in 2-3 years, and that would start a wave across the country, libertarian argument notwithstanding. Of course, that would lead to growth hormone use, which currently is undetectable, and then gene therapy... there's always going to be something.

Like I say, competitive males will always seek an edge.

D - There was a survey among top level Olympic athletes that asked "if you could take a pill that would guarantee that you'd win a medal, but would also guarantee that you'd die in ten years, would you take it?". Fifty seven percent said yes! That's the mentality of the elite athlete, the Type A personality, and that has to be made so

expensive, so costly, that it prevents them from harming themselves in spite of themselves. Lance Armstrong paid the price of the devil to win a few Tour de France championships to be on top of the world and now he's in the pit. We've got to keep the pressure on for the sake of young people. When their hero is found to be taking drugs to win, what does that kid think? He might start taking drugs at 14 and ruin his whole life, his body's system. A lot of "steroids" now, you don't know what's in them, if they were made in a dirty bathtub in a homemade lab somewhere. You might be ingesting rat poison, for all you know! It's all black market now. Not only are you trying to cheat, but you're putting your life in danger. Society has a responsibility to do the right thing. In the case of Lance Armstrong and Barry Bonds, all it took was one guy at the USADA (anti doping agency) deciding to do the right thing, to go after them, and they were exposed and taken down.

My vision is that you can lift from 10 years old until you're really old. Powerlifting is a positive lifestyle – you learn nutrition, discipline, you gain strength and achievement. It's something you can carry with you your whole life. It's not just national and world championships. To do that, I think that powerlifting has to become "not for profit", where it's run by the athletes, and has a national governing board. Powerlifting will never be like baseball or football, where millions of people watch and big money is involved. I see it as an Olympic sport that comes under the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It would be recognized as a viable sport that could help any other sport. **PLT**

"...WE GET TO HELP PEOPLE; IT REALLY IS OUR PASSION. THIS ISN'T OUR HOBBY. WE UNDERSTAND THIS ABOUT EACH OTHER."