

My Training Partner, Chuck Vogelpohl



BY MATT R. WENNING, M.S.

The name "Chuck Vogelpohl" is the epitome of powerlifting. He is the first lifter that comes to mind for many weightlifters and fans when intensity, drive and longevity are mentioned. His work ethic is what legends are made of, and his discipline is beyond measure. Powerlifters come and go, but Chuck Vogelpohl is a name spoken through many lifting eras.

Vogelpohl is known for his insane squatting power. Some of his squatting accomplishments include the first man to squat over 1,000 lbs. at 220-lb. class or under (1,025 at 220), and more current world record squats of 1,150 at 275 and 1,140 at 242. Deadlifting is also a talent with 800-plus-lb. deadlifts from the 220 all the way to the 275 weight classes in both conventional and the sumo positions. Bench pressing has always been a chore for him, but he consistently presses more than 600 lbs. with a best of 635 lbs. This has given him totals well above the 2,600 mark on many occasions.

Vogelpohl's training has evolved from old-school, hard-nosed drive to newer methods, including bands, chains, etc. His training ideas have achieved results both with him and some of his best training partners, both past (Matt Dimel, Kenny Patterson, Rob Fusner, Chuck Fought) and present (Matt Wenning). In attempts to keep up with this living legend, his training partners have vomited, passed out and broken body parts. But the people who have been fortunate enough to train and bleed with him will always know they were a part of history and part of a process that brought the world one of the most gifted squatters and weightlifters ever. Vogelpohl currently trains at Lexen Gym in Grove City, Ohio, with Team Xtreme.

MATT WENNING (M.W.): "Chuck, tell us a little about where you're from and what you do."

CHUCK VOELPOHL (C.V.): I'm originally from Columbus, Ohio. I grew up and lived here all my life. I went to Briggs High School, which was a rough part of town. Fighting and standing up for yourself and your things were an everyday process. In high school I played foot-

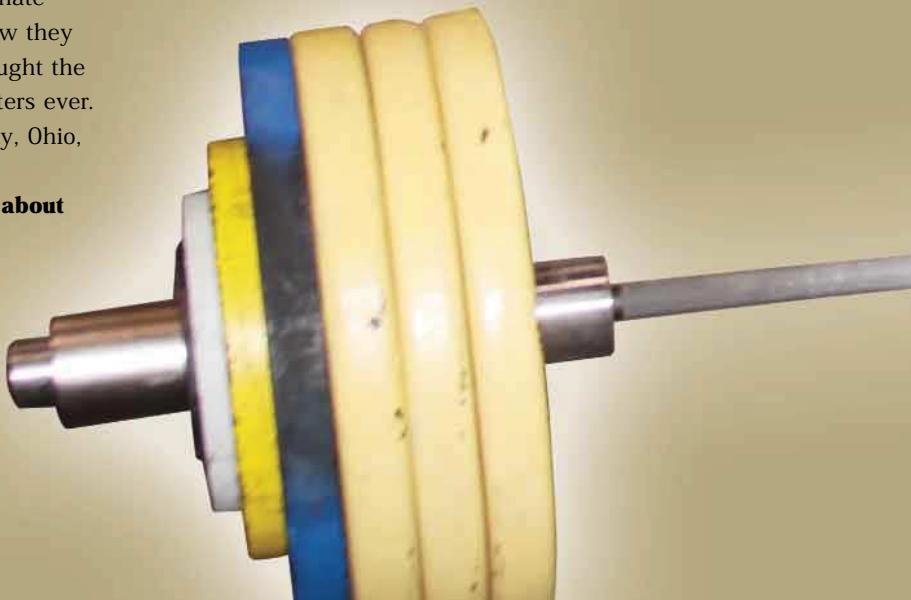
ball and lifted weights a little for that. I did some toughman competitions in my later teens and 20s, and then slowly got more serious about lifting. In one way or another I was always staying in shape.

As far as my profession goes, I work as a corrections officer for the state of Ohio and direct the fitness/wellness program for the inmates. I've been in the corrections job for 19 years and held the wellness program spot for 15 years. It's a pretty easy job that lets me train hard and eat around the clock if I need to. I do small workouts in the gym for extra assistance work. We don't have much, but we make do."

M.W.: "How did you start lifting?"

C.V.: In 1985 I started lifting in high school for football. I would lift in the off-season at the YMCA. I did a bench meet there where I hit a 420 bench raw at 204-lb. bodyweight. This meet had given me a competition bug, so I signed up and went to a powerlifting meet in Lima, Ohio, in that same year. This included squatting 575, benching 400 and deadlifting 650 with a total of 1,625. The following week I worked out at Westside Barbell, which at the time was a commercial gym and open to the public. Some of the other original crew members at the gym invited me to train with them. The gym was a major influence in my direction and my future in powerlifting. That's where I recall my training really taking off — between 1985 and 1986."

M.W.: "What were your



favorite competitions and or lifting memories through the years?"

C.V.: "WPO Arnold is where the best lifters and the best memories were for me. I had debated retiring before the WPO had come around, then the benefits of money and competing against the best lifters changed my mind. It was the first time me and many others had the best on one platform. It brought people from all federations and countries to compete to see who was the strongest. I believe that was the closest we will get to a unified powerlifting worlds. I don't see it coming back around in the near future, which is a shame. In the old days you had USPF guys like Cpt. Kirk and Eddy Coan, and then the APF guys, who never really competed



against each other. The WPO started to get big carryover to all federations, which allowed the best to go against the best.

My favorite year and best lifting memory was the WPO finals in 2006, where I did a world record squat and total at 275 lbs. The WPO had the baddest platform, the biggest crowds and the most intensity, period. The next year, 2007, would have been a great year except that I got sick. Oh, well. A few months later I hit the world record 1,150 squat at 275.

As far as memories go in lifting, I know of older lifters' accomplishments, like Larry Pacifico's nine world titles and Don Rienholdt's amazing totals, but I never actually saw them lift. Ed Coan was the guy in my era that totally blew my mind, and everyone else's. His lifting from 181 all the way to 275 was just unbelievable. There will never be another lifter like him who dominates so many for so long. My biggest memory of Coan was at world championship in Dayton, Ohio. I don't remember the year. He did a 942 squat and then he passed out. After the flight order was back to him (15 minutes or so) he came back and did 962. Totally unreal. Steve Goggins was also always at the top of the competitions in many federations and gets a lot of credit in my book.

A more recent memory that stands out is Andy Bolton pulling 1,003 in New York in 2006. That was one of the greatest lifting moments in history. Everyone wondered if it could be done, and in Lake George, N.Y., it happened. That dude is a pulling machine and my hat goes off to him".

M.W.: "What are the main keys to success, in your opinion?"

C.V.: "1.) Consistency in training. You must show up even when you don't feel like it. My lifting ability never came from superior genetics. I worked for every ounce of strength, both through being sick and having other commitments and obligations.

2.) Push through your injuries. Train around them to make consistent progress. I like to use duct tape and wraps on everything that hurts. Pain is usually giving you some indicator of muscle weaknesses and imbalances, so I try to find what is causing it and fix it. I



don't lay around waiting for the pain to go away. I train as hard as I can around it, and sometimes through it.

3.) Never quit. There are some things I just don't have respect for, and one of them is quitting. I have always tried to live out my goals to the fullest. I believe that's what separates the weak from the strong. Pushing through adversity is just life. Suck it up."

M.W.: "You are a legend to many lifters. Who have been the biggest influences on your lifting and who are your idol(s)?"

C.V.: "In weightlifting, my influences were Eddy Coan. I can't say enough about him; he is a rare breed. Watching him do the things he did was definitely an influence and he is an idol. What more do you have to say than 900-lb. pull at 220? Steve Goggins was also a big influence and a top lifter.

Matt Dimel is just one of those guys who was just so strong it was unbelievable. Many people don't know this, but I suffered a broken neck while wrestling Matt Dimel, which caused some nerve damage in my arms and is why I believe my bench has always faulted behind my other lifts. At least, that's what I will blame it on! Matt could have been one of the strongest lifters ever.

In the beginning, I always wanted to beat Mark Marenlli since he was the strongest lifter at the gym, so that gave me the drive to push past him and start on the path to where I'm at today.

Other than those guys, I don't really pay attention to people outside my current weight class. My influence mostly comes from what I can make myself do, and from my close training partners."

M.W.: "Your body has taken a beating over the years. Tell us about your injuries and how you have overcome them."

C.V.: "Chiropractic care has been a lifesaver for my career and my overall health. Without constant adjustments and work of that nature, I would have had to call it quits some time ago.

Stretching has also been a big component of me staying as healthy as possible. Warm-ups are longer now, and an integral part of my training. I do all types of stretching, from dynamic warm-ups to static stretching, along with lots of liniment gel on my muscles and joints.

After heavy bouts of training, I take Epsom salt baths to relax the muscles and aid in recovery. This seems to help me sleep

better and therefore recover faster.

My mental state will also not allow me to do slow training, at least not in my younger years, which has made my injuries last longer at times. I'm much more cautious now, but still like to go hard. I mentally push through many of my issues, and I believe my mental state is what has kept me making gains for as long as I have."

M.W.: "What is the best advice you can give to the beginning lifter who aspires to be at your level?"

C.V.: "You need good training partners who have the same goals as you. They must be there on time, push you past limits you set for yourself and not blow smoke up your ass. There have been a lot of training partners I have had that quit training with me because I wouldn't let them slack on depth, or wouldn't compliment them when the lift was bogus or short-sold. I'm a hard-ass on technique and don't allow my training partners to do things that wouldn't pass in my book.

Start with the basics! So many younger lifters are getting in to gangster bench shirts and suits, only to realize that, at the top, it still comes down to strength. Stay raw for some time to build up your true base and core strength. Too many beginners start in the best gear and wonder why they get hurt, or never get any better. Most of Team Xtreme's training is done raw; gear is used in moderation and true strength is never compromised."

Here's what Vogelpohl's idols and other top lifters have to say about him:

ED COAN: "Everyone talks about intensity and how crazy he is, but no one gives him enough credit for his longevity and how smart and methodical he has had to be in his training to last. He has come back from unbelievable injuries. Regardless of federation, I would consider him one of the greatest powerlifters ever."

STEVE GOGGINS: "When I think of Chuck V., I think of what I try to teach other powerlifters to be: intense, focused with unbreakable concentration and just one bad ass mo-fo. He's like that rap song, Never Scared. I think he is one of the greatest powerlifters and one who worked for all his results. He is the example of what hard work can do." PM

Matt Wenning is one of only a handful of people to total over 2,650 lbs. in a professional competition, hold an all-time world record of 2,665 lbs. in the 308-lb. class, squat more than 1,100 lbs. and bench press and deadlift more than 800 lbs. in a full powerlifting meet. He is a private strength coach at Lexen gym in Grove City, Ohio; a personal trainer to executives and professionals at Capital Club Athletics; and contracted by the U.S. Army and Washington Township fire department. He also works with physicians, children with disabilities, and has helped five players to NFL contracts. He has trained with Chuck Vogelpohl for five years.