

# POWER INTERVIEW

## SAM BYRD interviewed by Bruce Citerman

**BC:** Sam, thanks for taking the time to talk to me. Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**B:** I live in Chattanooga, TN, where I own a small gym and personal training business called the Iron Playground. I am 25 years old, about 5'7" and my weight fluctuates a lot from around 205-230, depending on the time of year. My comfortable weight is about 220. I have been training with weights since I was about 15, but have only been competing in powerlifting for the last couple of years. In that time I have been able to meet and train with a lot of great lifters.

**BC:** A lot of guys got started with weights to get stronger for a sport, what initially got you in the weight room?

**SB:** I got into lifting weights to get as big and strong as I possibly could. I took a weightlifting class in high school where the coach had something called the Big 7 and the 2,000 lb. Club. Basically it was seven exercises and the goal was a 2,000 lb. total. The coach kept all the records for each lift and total on a big board for everyone to see and all I could ever think about was making it to the top of that board! Not much has changed since then.

**BC:** You have already accomplished a lot in the short time you have been involved in the sport including becoming the lightest ever to squat over 1,000 pounds. What do your other lifts look like and what can we expect from you in the future?

**SB:** When I was first learning about lifting, I remember coming across an article about Fred Hatfield and all he had accomplished during his career, and the thing that really stuck out to me was the fact that at the time he had been the lightest man to squat over 1,000 pounds. Right then and there I told myself that one day I would hold that title. Over time I drifted towards bodybuilding and lost track of that goal, but when I saw Chuck Vogelwohl on the cover of Monster Muscle for his 1025 at 220, it reignited my fire. It feels great to finally accomplish such a lofty goal I set for myself so long ago.

As for my other lifts, my best bench is 622

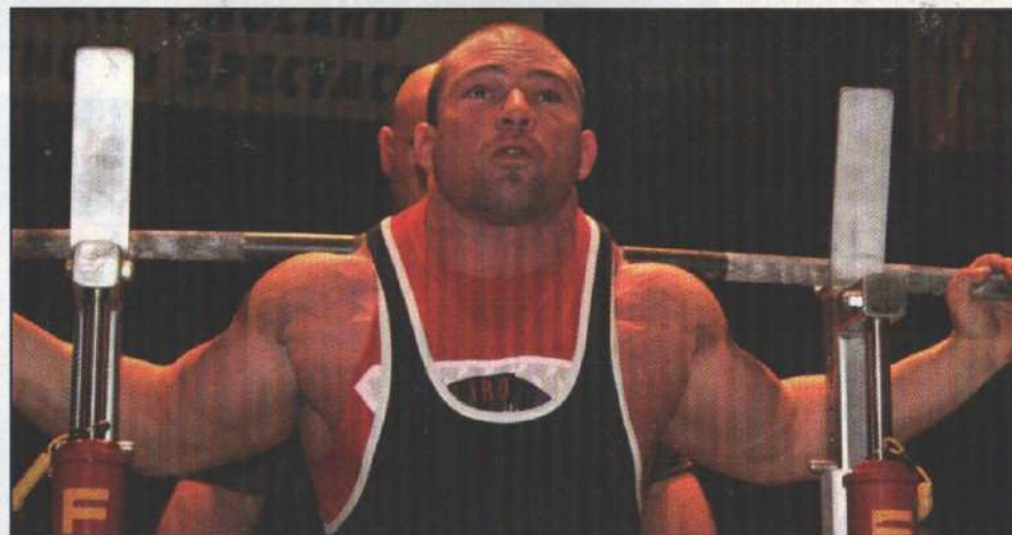
in the gym, 551 in competition and my best pull is a 683. I totaled 2149 in my first APF meet and broke the 198 squat record with 915. I have only done two geared meets, so I have yet to put together a good total. I have had some shoulder issues holding back my bench and have been training my deadlift hard. Hopefully I will be able to pull it all together soon and post a big total.

**BC:** You mentioned having some shoulder issues. What other injuries have you had to deal with?

**SB:** Back when I was bodybuilding I was a consistent 500+ raw bencher, but I have had some nagging shoulder issues for the last two years. Sometimes my bench would be fine, and sometimes I would struggle with 405. It was hit or miss like that, but since I could still train, I didn't think much of it. While I was training for the New England Record Breakers Raw meet I got on some prescription anti-inflammatories for a couple weeks and my bench started climbing again. I went heavy one night to test where I was and see how the shoulder held up. It was the heaviest I had been in about a year and everything felt great! The next week warming up I heard a loud pop in that shoulder. After the set I couldn't lift my arm without pain. I had managed to tear the labrum of my left shoulder in half, just four weeks before the meet. I kept lifting when I could and the pain began radiating down my arm into my biceps. I didn't get it checked out, and didn't want to know what was wrong, not smart, but I competed on it anyway and managed to do ok by posting a 425 raw bench.

When I finally did get it checked out and learned I needed surgery I knew I would be out for a while. My squats had been feeling strong so I decided to take a shot at the grand and take token bench and DL before I went under the knife. Once there my competitive nature came out and couldn't just take tokens. I managed to bench 523 and just missed a 777 pull for a

(Sam Byrd interview continued on page 97)



Sam Byrd squats at the New England Record Breakers, after tearing his shoulder. (BodyTech USA)



(interview continued from pg. 26)

2200 lb. total, and had my surgery a few days later. It's been 10 weeks post op as of this interview and I'm still not cleared to lift yet, so im glad that I hit that squat while I was feeling good.

The only other serious injury I have had was back in 2004 when I crash landed a squat and tore the meniscus and strained the MCL of my left knee. It was my second time in a squat suit and I didn't have any experienced powerlifters around. As I sat back to descend, the material was so thick I didn't push back hard enough and it shot my hips forward and I lost my balance. It was not a major injury and only required a scope for some clean up, but it took me a long time to recover from it. I was unable to fully flex my quads or fully extend my knee for about eight months.

**BC:** Well, I'm glad you got that taken care of and wish you a speedy recovery. Would you mind telling us about your training routine?

**SB:** Sure. My training routine changes a lot throughout the year depending on my current goals. I believe that everything works, but everything doesn't work all the time. I use high reps, low reps, heavy weight, light weight and everything in between. But I always fall back on the same basic size and strength routine. I always see peaking routines in here which don't do much for you unless you have already laid the foundation work leading up to it, so I'll lay out my foundation training program.

#### Monday - Bench, Heavy Tris

Flat Bench: Up to max 1-5 reps, then back to down to 2-3 sets of 3-5 tough reps.

Incline Bench: Up to max 5 the get 1-2 more sets for as many as I can.

Dumbbell Flies: 4 sets of 15

Nose Breakers: 3 sets of 8-12

Other Heavy Tri Movement: 3 sets of 8-12

Calves

#### Tuesday - Back, Heavy Bis

Pull Ups: 3 sets to failure

Bent Rows: 3 sets of 10

\*alt every other week with DL for 3 sets of 3-6

Barbell Curls: 3 sets of 6-10

DB Curls: 3 sets of 6-10

Calves

#### Wednesday - REST

#### Thursday - Shoulders, Traps

Shrugs: 3 sets of 12

Close Grip Bench: Up to max triple, then back down sets of 5; or speed benches

Shoulder Press: 3 sets of 5-8

DB Lateral Raises: 3 sets of 12-15

DB Shoulder Press: 3 sets of 8-12

Upright Rows: 3 sets of 12-15

Calves

#### Friday - Arms

Barbell Curls: 3 sets of 10-15

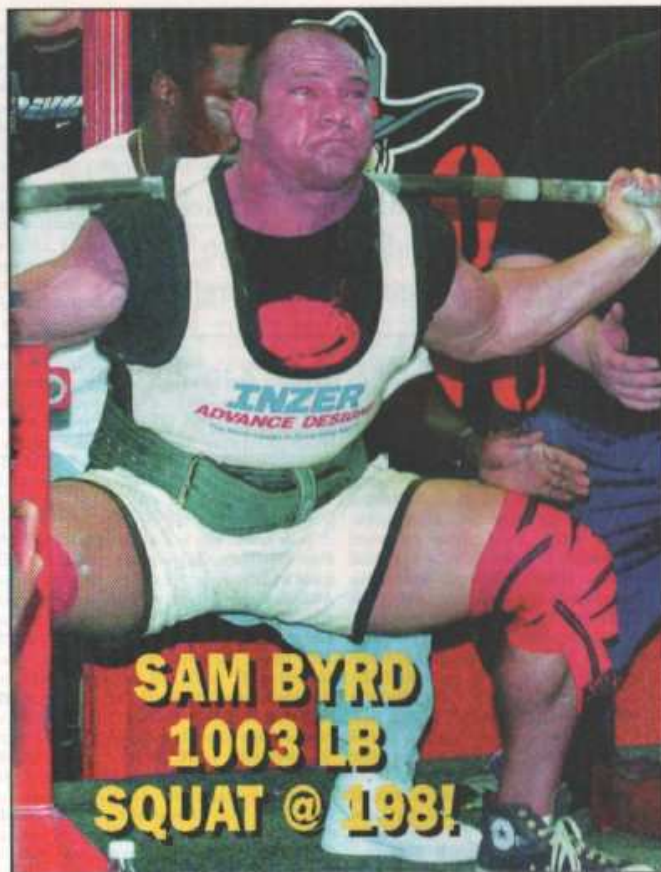
DB Curls: 3 sets of 10-15

DB Hammer Curls: 3 sets of 10-15

Tri Press Downs: 3 sets of 10-15

Rope Press Downs: 3 sets of 10-15

Overhead Rope Ext.: 3 sets of 10-15



As he appeared on the cover of the OCT/06 PL USA. (Ken Overby)

#### Saturday - Legs

My leg workouts vary the most and I do a lot of bodybuilding work for them offseason.

Squats: Up to heavy set of 5

Hack Squats: 2-3 sets of 12-20

Leg Sled: 2-3 sets of 15

Leg Ext.: 2-3 sets of 15

Leg Curls: 2-3 sets of 15

#### Sunday - REST

**BC:** That looks more like a bodybuilding routine than a powerlifting routine. Does that really work?

**SAM:** As I have said, it works quite well for me, but it is not all I do. I believe that you must cycle periods of high intensity with periods of lower intensity and higher volume. When I say lower intensity, I mean lighter weights, but its still heavy for whatever rep range you are trying to get whether its 2 or 20. I don't care what routine you use, who is training you, or what principals you are using, you just flat out have to want it!

**BC:** How has nutrition played a role in your success in both bodybuilding and powerlifting?

**SB:** Nutrition is probably the single most important factor in the muscle building process - even more important than training and supplementation. Anybody can go into the gym and train hard, but all the REAL hard work is done in the kitchen. You are only in the gym 1-2 hours day, so its what you do during the other 22-23 hours

that separates the winners from the also-rans. Intense training without proper nutrition is like trying to run a Formula One race car on 87 unleaded gasoline. The results you get are just nowhere near what the car would be able to produce with the right fuel. The body is the same way. You can't expect to maximize one without paying equal attention to the other. Whether your goal is to build muscle, lose body fat, or a combination, how efficiently you eat is critical to your success.

**BC:** What is your advice for the beginner?

**SB:** My advice to the beginner is to have fun with the sport, train instinctively, meaning if you feel like destroying the weight - destroy it. If you feel beat up and tired then go through the range of motion, and use the weight your body is comfortable with. There are no secrets to training, either you have it or you don't. I can't give you advice to make you a champion because this comes from the inside; genetics, the drive to be the best, and by having no upper limit to your success. Oh yeah, I almost forgot the most important tip! Make sure you go to the bathroom before you put your squat suit on!

**BC:** (Laughs) That's some pretty good advice! So what are your plans and comments about powerlifting?

**SB:** I still have some personal goals to achieve in the 198 class before I move up to the 220s and into the WPO. I plan on trying out some new gear and spending more time working in it this year to really get the most out of it. I am also considering doing another bodybuilding show in the next year, either this summer or next.

One of the things I have been working on over the last few months is a raw powerlifting exhibition series called the Raw Powerfest. The Raw Powerfest Series is a nationwide series of events showcasing Strength and Power with a wide array of events including Powerlifting, Bench for Reps, Iron Triathlon, Strongman, Arm Wrestling, and Strict Curls competitions.

The Raw Powerfest is not affiliated with any federation nor is it a federation in itself. The Powerlifting series of the Powerfest is designed to give powerlifters, athletes, and gym rats an opportunity to compete against each other on a level playing field under the circumstances any average gym goer can relate to. There are a lot of lifters, myself included, who would like to compete in a raw PL meet for fun without having to succumb to WADA testing which bans many over the counter supplements. I would also like to make clear that we are not against the use of powerlifting gear or supportive equipment, but we do want to provide a venue for lifters to prove themselves against the weight without the added support.

In promoting this series, we hope to expand the sport of powerlifting and reach lifters who otherwise would not compete. It is our belief that the numbers of geared powerlifting intimidate new prospects to the sport. We also believe that with the advancement in gear, it is hard to tell how one may compare to a top athlete either because they have not used the gear, or because they may not have become as proficient in it.

For more information on the Raw Powerfest Series, please visit [www.rawpowerfest.com](http://www.rawpowerfest.com).

**BC:** That sounds like a great idea, and I know there is a lot of buzz about this already. Are there any final comments you would like to make, or people to thank?

**SB:** I would just like to invite everyone to visit my website and forum at [www.IronPlayground.net](http://www.IronPlayground.net). I would also to thank Alan at APT ([www.prowriststaps.com](http://www.prowriststaps.com)) for providing me with the best knee wraps on the market, the North Georgia Barbell crew (NGBB) for all their help, Kara Bohigian for making the video of my squat, all the great people I have met since I have been in the sport, and all the training partners I have had over the years. I would also like to thank my biggest supporters, my parents, who have stood behind me in everything I have ever done.

**BC:** Sam, thanks for your time and I look forward to seeing what you do in the future.