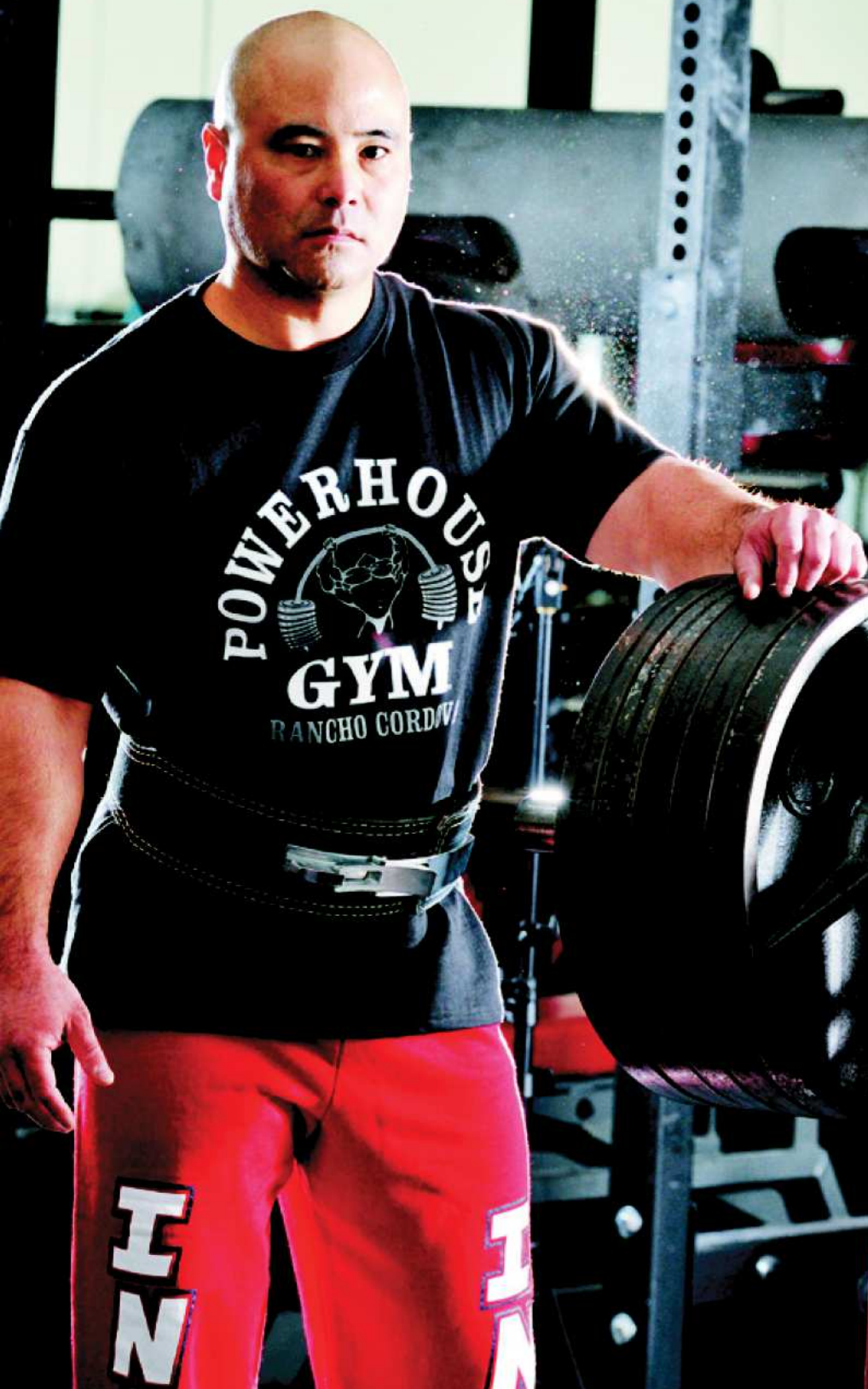


# MIKE HARA



## MIKE LAMBERT INTERVIEWS THE COMPACT POWERHOUSE

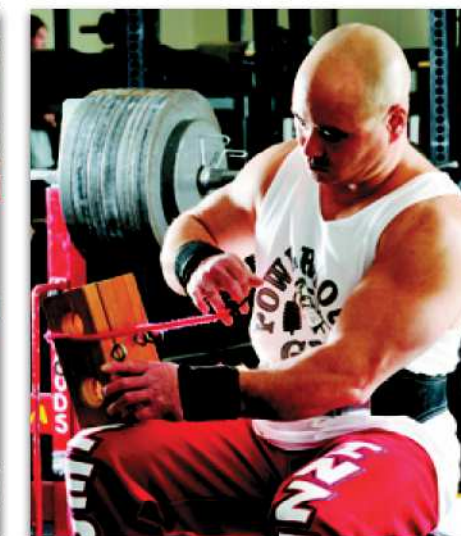
Can you recall the circumstances of some of the numerical milestones in your bench pressing career?

In order to discuss any milestones so far in my bench pressing career, I should begin with how I first started out. I became a law enforcement officer in 1984, and weighing about 120 pounds, I really needed to get stronger and more fit. I ended up joining a brand new 24-hour Nautilus and was lured in by all the glitz and “gym scenery.” Right after I paid my sign up fees, I eagerly walked over to the bench press area to see what I could do. I ended up putting up 95 pounds (including the bar) and struggled to do a couple of reps with it! Man, I thought I was stronger than that—I guess the weight machines I used in high school were not that accurate! In any event, a few minutes go by and two women start pressing on the bench next to mine. They were both small and petite and I thought I might impress them with my 95 pounds—that is, until they loaded 115 pounds onto the bar and both did reps with it. I was so embarrassed by this incident that I left immediately and did not step foot into another gym until five years later.

I competed in my first meet in the 132-pound class in the California Police and Fire Games in 1990. Weighing 128, I ended up benching 248 pounds. I competed in the 132-pound class for the next four years, winning the ADFPA (USAPL) California State Championships and set the California state record, benching 325 pounds.

I then moved up to the 148-pound class and competed here for the next six years. While in the 148s, I competed at the national level and won open titles at the AAU, USPF and ADFPA/USAPL Bench Press Nationals. I also competed in my first IPF World Championships during this time and finished with the bronze medal. My best bench while competing at 148 was 429 pounds—which is still the USAPL California state record.

I then moved up to the 165-pound class and have been competing here for the last ten years. My best bench at this weight class has been 562 pounds, which is still the USAPL Open National and IPF Masters world record. During this time, I have also won multiple USAPL National Bench Press titles and IPF World Championships and am proud to have accomplished all of this as a lifetime drug-free lifter.



How many national and world titles have you won?

I have won ten National (USPF/ADFPA/USAPL) Open Bench Press Championships and five IPF Open World Bench Press Championships. I have also won two IPF Masters World Championships.

What was it like to compete in the IPF World Championships and come away with the gold in that arena?

Competing in the IPF is an experience of a lifetime. If a lifter truly wants to experience competing against “world” competition, this is it! The IPF World Championships are the toughest venues for competitive powerlifting that I know of. Competing in the IPF takes dedication—everything from having to win the Nationals to qualify for the World Championships, the overseas travel, the two hour weigh-ins, the strictness of the judging, the quality and integrity of the drug testing and the level of the competition is top notch.

At the IPF level, placing in the top three in your weight class is an accomplishment. The national flags of the top finishers are displayed the same way you see it in Olympic sports. The national anthem of the country for the champion is also played. I can tell you that watching the U.S. flag being raised while listening to our national anthem is, well, emotional—there is nothing else like it!

How has your training program evolved over your competition career?

When I began powerlifting, my training used to consist of using light to moderate weights for high reps. As I have gotten older, I now use heavier weights and fewer reps. I have also incorporated boards in my training. I firmly believe that if I had been using heavier weights and fewer reps when I started training years ago, I might have been able to prevent some of the injuries I have incurred over the years. I have also found that to continue to make gains

in this sport, one has to be open to new ideas and training methods. If you want to have some longevity in this sport, I really feel that you have to listen to your body and make adjustments accordingly, so as to minimize the threat of injury as you get older.

What is your athletic background in areas other than powerlifting?

In high school, I lettered in wrestling, played football and was a member of the diving team. In college, I played competitive table tennis and placed second at the U.S. Nationals. After college, I began racing motorcycles, competing in roadrace events at Sears Point (Infiniteon Raceway) and at Willow Springs Raceway.

Currently, besides powerlifting, I am an active competitor in both team and club level bass fishing tournaments and have won three Angler of the Year titles with the Folsom Bass Team. I have also recently begun studying and practicing Judo with my six-year-old son Kyle.

What about your personal background (family, professional career, education)?

I have been married for seven years to my wife, Christi, and have three boys: Josh (12), Kyle (6) and Logan (2).

I have a BA in Criminal Justice and am employed by the State of California as a criminal detective and have been a law enforcement officer for over twenty years.

Who are the three toughest competitors you have gone up against on the platform?

Larry Miller of the USA, Daiki Kodama of Japan and Markus Schick of Germany.

What have been the five most important factors in your success as a lifter?

- Support from my family
- Support from my training partners
- Prior competitive experiences
- Strong desire to succeed
- Staying relatively physically healthy and men-

tally focused through the use of proper training methods and realistic goal setting strategies

Who are some of the people who have been instrumental in your success over the years?

My wife Christi and my children have all been extremely supportive of my bench pressing career. I really could not have been successful if it weren't for their blessing.

And, of course, my training partners are the best a guy could ask for. We have been together for years and a lifter could not ask for a better and more reliable bunch of guys than James Hunter, Rich Ludlam, Jason Arnold, Jodi Woods and past workout partners Dan Tamori, Garry Furry and Scott Pope! I also have to say thanks to my friends Donovan and Jennifer Thompson for all their hard work in managing and coaching the U.S. national teams during the last several years. Their dedication to the sport and behind-the-scenes efforts have made the entire IPF experience of traveling and competing abroad pleasant for not only myself, but my teammates as well!

Speaking of travel, I also have to say thanks to my “traveling” family. This includes the Doans; Dave, Devan, Darci and Steve Petrencak. I have had the opportunity to travel to Europe with these great people for the last ten years and they have provided support and helped me at each of my world championship meets.

I also consider myself lucky to have a great place to train—a gym that has the right equipment and atmosphere, and where the management doesn't freak when you mention the word chalk! Mark Allen and Janelle Haney own the Powerhouse Gym in Rancho Cordova and have done a great job keeping powerlifters, bodybuilders, and MMA fighters happy training there.

Lastly, I also have to give big props to both John Inzer of Inzer Advanced Designs and Pete Alaniz and Ken Anderson at Titan Support Systems for providing me with the best powerlifting apparel on the planet! ☺

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