

INTERVIEW

CAROL ANN MYERS The Power within the Woman as interviewed by AMBER SUTER



Carol Ann in fitness competition

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to meet Carol Ann Myers, let me take the time to bring her to you. Carol Ann Myers is a resident of Florida, and a National Level Elite Female Powerlifter and additionally, Figure Competitor, and future Bodybuilding Competitor. I've known of her for years and have had the privilege to see her lift on several occasions and now can say that she is one of my truest female powerlifting buddies who encourages me, inspires me, pushes me through what I feel are my limits, and picks me up when I fail. I truly admire Carol Ann and hope you enjoy this candid look at her and her powerlifting career, so you can know why she is such an inspiration.

Let's start off with:

Q: What got you interested in powerlifting? What got you hooked to powerlifting?

A: My first meet was a push-pull WABDL event in March 2003. I had agreed to participate in the meet with Bobby, my husband, if he would not try to drop into a lower weight-class and hurt his strength. I enjoyed the training

and reaping the benefits that came with the rigorous workouts. I was leaning up, putting on a little muscle, and building self-esteem. Unbeknownst to me was the addiction that comes from lifting in an arena where everyone is cheering you on to your goals. That is what hooked me on the sport. The support that I received, not only from my husband, and friends, but also from the other competitors and the audience was phenomenal. Everyone understood the need to conquer the obstacle and obtain the goal.

Q: When and what was your first competition like? And is there any advice you would give those who are a novice?

A: I can remember the butterflies in my stomach and my overwhelming fear of failing in front of everyone. I knew I had trained and done all I could, but fear is a dangerous enemy. I remember getting angry at the weights in the warm-up area to quell my stomach. I was tapping my head on a block wall to drown out all the distractions. Once I got on the platform to pull my first official deadlift, it was like being back in the gym. The training kicked in and the nerves settled. I pulled better that Saturday than on any day of training. I earned a first place and best lifter for my efforts.

My story is my advice to the novice: if you want to lift and compete—do it. Go to the gym to get started. Never be scared of failing—you may not always place at a meet, but personal goals and records are the greatest accomplishment. Taking control of your health and your self-esteem are both great achievements that will last a lifetime.

Q: What are your accomplishments in powerlifting so far, raw and equipped?

A: I was blessed to have won the 2005 and 2006 APF Senior Nationals 165 lb Open Women's Class, and the 2007 APC Nationals 165 lb Women's Masters Division. My largest competition-equipped lifts are a 565 lb squat, a 281 lb bench, and a 451 lb deadlift. I have just recently started competing in

raw meets and have a 400 lb squat, a 225 lb bench, and a 375 lb deadlift at 148 lb on record in the SPF.

Q: When you achieved Elite status, did your goals change? If so, how?

A: I cannot say that my goals changed, because my constant focal point was always to add a little more weight to the bar! I achieved Elite status very early in my lifting career and it was simply a title. Titles don't mean much if you are unable to live up to the hype.

Q: Have you had any challenges along the way, such as illness, injury, etc.? How did that drive you to rebound from it?

A: I have been extremely fortunate not to have experienced any severe injuries. I made it a practice a long time ago to listen to my body. If something does not feel right or causes pain—it's time to abort. If you train to the point where it is detrimental to your physical health and well-being, then you are inviting injury. Everyone has bad training days and there is always tomorrow. It is best to train smart.

Q: How has powerlifting affected female powerlifters positively or negatively?

A: I believe very strongly in a woman's right to express herself in any avenue and powerlifting is certainly an expression of not only physical strength but also mental tenacity. Although the world at large is more open to equality of the sexes, a woman who displays muscle or competes in a male-dominated sport is still looked upon as an oddity. Femininity is not an outward characteristic as much as it is an integral part of a woman's psyche. Powerlifting, in my opinion, has opened the main gate for women to express themselves in a positive venue.

Q: What do you feel is important in being a role model for other female powerlifters?

A: I believe that everything you do should reflect who you are, what you believe in and how you embrace life. I do my best to live life to its fullest—not putting off until tomorrow that which I can accomplish today. I believe that if something is worth doing, then do it right. I see too many lifters at all levels looking for the "gift" lifts. My advice is this: have the will power to train, have the determination to improve your lifting potential, and have the integrity to do it right, and above all—keep a positive attitude. The best advice I can give any lifter is to keep it real—powerlifting translates into daily life over and over again.

Q: You've just completed your first figure competition. How was that experience?

A: I have never ventured so far out of my comfort zone! I dieted and trained extreme cardio for 8-10 weeks following my last raw meet. I obtained tips from some of the best in the sport; I walked on stage at 140 lbs at 5.8% body fat. I went into the show not looking to place, but simply to celebrate the achievement that I had made in my appearance. I placed third in the masters division and fourth in the tall-open division. The judges were very supportive when they said you are "too hard and too big" to do figure competitions. I have never received a nicer compliment! The hard work paid off!

Q: Are you planning to do more figure or bodybuilding shows?

A: Definitely. The competitors were a fantastic group—bodybuilders and figure contestants alike. Although it was a different platform, it was still an arena to display dedication and hard work. All in all, it was a positive experience.

Q: How was your diet leading up to the fitness shows compared to leading up to a powerlifting meet?

A: I left the pizza and burgers behind and focused on chicken and broccoli! I began the diet on November 19th under the supervision of John Micka, a nutritionist from Mississippi. Under his guidance, I was able to shed over twenty pounds with minimal strength loss. I adhered to a strict diet consisting of 1300 calories with 210 gm of protein daily. I ate six times each day. 1300 calories is a large amount of food when the calories are clean. I originally wanted to drop the weight to compete in a raw meet; my goal was to total 1000 lbs in the 148 lb class (I normally lift in the 165 lb class). I cut the weight, increased my overall health, and was successful in obtaining my 1000 lb goal.

Q: Have you ever thought about doing a strongwoman competition? **A:** I have thought about it, but that is where the process stops. The condition of the apparatus and the safety of the lifts is lacking for me. I am very successful lifting raw, so the idea of no gear does not bother me. However, ripping my biceps or dropping the stones on my toes is more than a little daunting. My hat is off to all those that compete in the sport.

Q: How has powerlifting changed for women over the years, positively or negatively?

A: I wish I could say that the changes are positive, but I see little to comment on either way. There are still far too few women

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in the sport. The idea of becoming bulky and manly is still the common misconception. Also, I think the sport in general is still biased. This is still a male-dominated world, female executives make 30% less than their male counterparts, female bodybuilders compete for less than half of the prize money awarded to men, and female powerlifters are a primarily entertainment. Look at how the WPO treated the elite women: you were lucky to get an invite to lift if you picked up your expenses and there was never a true completion for prize money. Until the men of our sport stand with us, we will just have to keep doing the best we can.

Q: How has your training evolved over the past few years?

A: Initially my training was aimed at particular goals and gaining a basic understanding of the fundamentals of each lift. Supportive gear is a lesson all of its own. I started with the very basic equipment and moved my way up gradually. There were times when the gear won the battle and I would have to back up and re-group. Now that I have a greater understanding of the dynamics, I concentrate on increasing strength, stamina, and perfecting leverage points. The more concise the movement, the more power I am able to utilize.

Q: Who are a few of the powerlifters you look up to, both male and female and why?

A: Bobby and I have been very blessed to have had the opportunity to train and be friends with some of the greatest powerlifters of our generation. Jon Grove and NGBB, Joe Ladnier, Kara Bohigan, Garry Frank and Hardcore Barbell, Shawna Mendelson, and the girls from Big Iron, all have had a great impact on my lifting. These lifters have shared not only their gyms and equipment, but also their vast knowledge and inspiration with me. I am definitely a sum of parts. Anything that you can learn from another lifter is something that you are able to add to your lifting repertoire. The more you understand, the better equipped you will become meet time. Powerlifters are a unique group of individuals because we truly understand the drive and lack of sanity that it takes to get beneath the weight.

Q: What are your views on training alone versus training with a crew?

A: Bobby and I have trained for numerous years with just each other in a backyard gym. We coach and spot one another. We have made tremendous gains



Carol Ann has squatted deep into the 500s in training & contests.

with just the two of us. We have learned how to unrack the monolift from the spotting position; we use a video camera to review our squat depth and form. (Hint: a heavy lift usually does not look as bad on video as it feels in your hands – that is a definite confidence booster.) We have learned to improvise with boxes for additional spots on the bench. Necessity dictates creativity. But, the largest lesson we have for any lifter is to never abandon the weight. We stay with each other from start to finish. We have also trained with large crews (NGBB, the Power Pit, and Hardcore Barbell) and it definitely gives you more confidence going after a maximum effort lift. You have great spotters and good feedback. Regardless of the training conditions, it is should always be your primary goal to place safety first. If you get hurt because of carelessness – you have no one to blame but yourself.

Q: Where have you trained to perfect your technique?

A: Jon Grove and Joe Ladnier are superior technique coaches. Both have helped me tremendously. I have an extremely strong squat (565 lb @ 165 APF Seniors, 605 lb @ 165 training in NGBB, and a 400 lb raw @ 146 lb) due to perfecting technique. Strength is only 33% of the lift, if your technique or your confidence is lacking – you are going to bomb. Good form in every lift will never be overrated.

Q: What kind of gear do you use?

A: I am committed to my Titan Boss! The briefs and suit are the best I have ever used. I am addicted to the support I receive as the lift gets to the critical point. I alternate between an Inzer Phenom and a Titan F-6 single-ply for the bench. The choice of shirt is dependent on my level of training at the time of the meet. Regardless of your

choice of gear, it is important to learn your equipment and get comfortable in it. Gear can be a benefit or a detriment to your lifting. Just because you put on a bench shirt or a squat suit does not mean your numbers will go up – train smart.

Q: How important is speed training in strength sports to you?

A: I wish I could tell you that speed training is vital to my workout, but I do little to none. I am one of those lifters who is either going to get the lift because of technique and strength or is not.

Q: Now that you are an Elite Female Powerlifter and Figure Competitor, where do you go from here? How does your family play a role in your future in strength sports?

A: My goals are still the same today that they were the first day I walked into a gym – to constantly improve myself. I began this journey with no sense of direction but forward. That direction has not changed; I just have a variety of roads to choose. I will always lift – it is an important part of my life that has brought about an increased sense of good health and well-being. An important aspect of that well-being is my family. My husband, Bobby, has been a major source of support for me. He has always supported my lifting and now my pursuit of figure/bodybuilding. He is a fantastic training partner and coach. Not a day goes by when he doesn't express his pride in my accomplishments.

Before my last question I would like to take a moment to thank Teresa & Gary Frank for their hospitality; Kara Bohigan for all her help and friendship; Joe Ladnier for his friendship and coaching; TITAN for believing in me enough to sponsor me!!!!; John & Amanda Micka for their friendship and support - John is the nutritionist that helped me with my diet. If you need a nutritionist John

knows his stuff!; Jesse Rodgers, President of the SPF; Amber Suter for doing this interview.

Last but not least, Jon Grove for all his help, coaching, friendship, generosity, and for inviting Bobby and I to be part of his North Georgia Barbell Team!!!

Q: If you could leave one piece of powerlifting legacy behind for female athletes to stand the test of time, what would that be? Whether it's advice, a quote, or something inspiring to keep the flame burning.

A: The best advice I can give is to always remember to lift for yourself. Never lose sight of the reason you decided to pick up your first weight – keep it real. I wish I could say "fun," but that isn't really accurate. Achieving any goal entails a great deal of work and dedication and sometimes even sacrifice. Keep it real and I hope to see on the road sometime.