

## APRIL SHUMAKER

as told to *Powerlifting USA* by Bob Gaynor

This interview was done with April right after she took best lifter at the IPF worlds master benchpress championship. April currently trains at Bob Benedix's World gym in Port St. Lucie, FL. Stop in for a workout; it's a great place for a powerlifter.

### Where were you born?

Worcester, MA, but I consider myself a Floridian because I moved to Florida with my parents when I was four.

### Where do you live now?

I live in Port St. Lucie, Florida, near the beach; the area known locally as the Treasure Coast.

### What is your educational background?

Martin County High School, certified personal trainer and aerobics and aqua exercise instructor.

### Married/children?

Married to my coach and trainer, Bill Shumaker. We have two children, seven-year-old Billy, and five-year-old April.

### Are you employed?

LA Fitness & Ruby Tuesday. I work at LA Fitness even though it is not a lifter's gym because I love to teach aerobics, and I work at Ruby Tuesday because it is my favorite restaurant.

### What are your hobbies?

Powerlifting, aerobics, playing games and going places with my children.

### What are some of the powerlifting titles/records you have?

It's hard to remember them all because some were done in the years BC (before children). Actually, I started competing as April Delmore in 1988 or so in the USPF "Natural" Division, which was the drug tested division of the USPF at that time—before Rich Peters left and started NASA. I won my first Nationals in Dallas, at the 1991 USPF Senior Nationals. I am proud of setting a world record bench in 1997 at the USPF Men and Women's Senior Nationals in Philadelphia. USPF 48-kilo National Champion in 1991, 1996 and 1997. IPF Pan-Am champion and champion of champions at the 1996 Pan-Am in Hamilton Ontario. 2009 USPF Olympia in Las Vegas where I set the American Open Bench record at 100-kilos. I also broke the long standing USAPL American open bench press record set by Jennifer Maile in 2003 with my 3rd attempt at 100-kilos at the Florida State meet on February 20th of this year. 2010 USPF American Cup 48-kilo champion and overall winner with a 903 total—which is a personal record of mine—along with a PR bench of 112.5-kilos. 2010 IPF World Masters bench press 48-kilo champion, and overall winner with a 100-kilo bench.

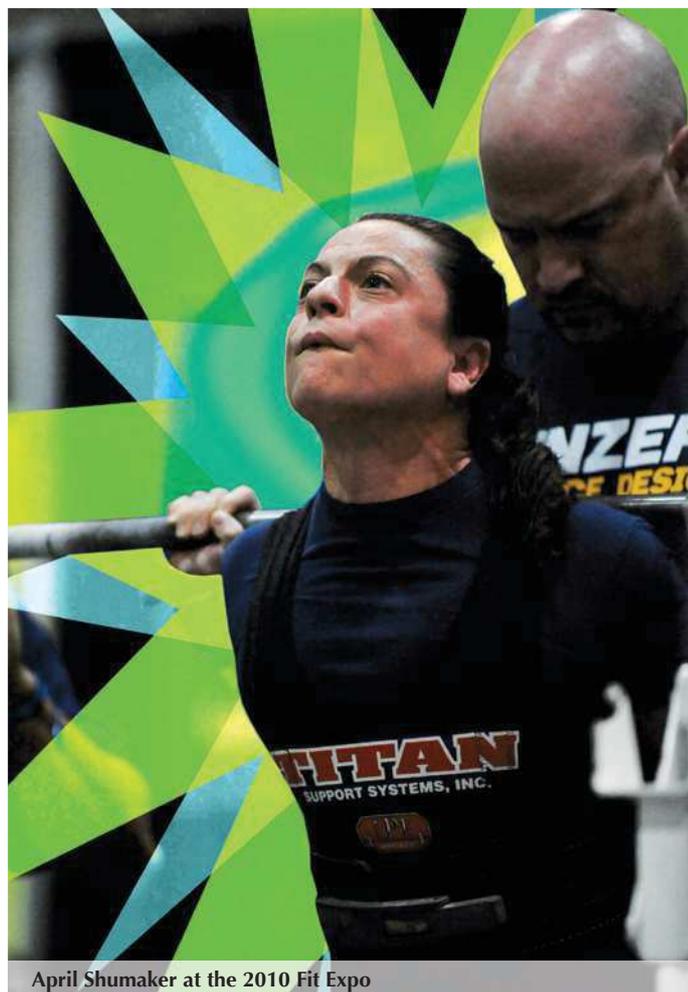
### How did you get started in powerlifting?

I was working at a local gym as an aerobics instructor and I wanted to lose weight and tone up like so many other girls do.

I was one of those girls walking around the gym saying, "How does this work? Can you show me how to use this machine?" Bill showed me how to use the machines and put together a nutritional and exercise program for me. When I started, I could not squat or bench the empty bar and I had to hold little dumbbells to learn the lifts. Warning: if you help someone in the gym, it could lead to marriage.

### What is your current weight class and bodyweight? What other weight classes have you lifted in?

I am currently in the 48-kilo class where I usually lift and I have lifted in the 44, 48, and 52-kilos classes. I am usually between 102 and 104.5 at



April Shumaker at the 2010 Fit Expo

a meet and 5 or so pounds heavier out of meet.

### What kind of training routine do you follow—number of days, sets, reps?

Our training revolves around the squat and bench. Deadlifts are tossed in on a squat day around five weeks out from a meet. Except for empty bar warm-ups, we never go over seven reps, with the majority of sets being five or three reps. Singles are done from time to time to test strength and to prepare for a meet, but we are drug free and cannot get stronger simply by doing singles. The squat and bench are done either twice a week or twice every eight days and we do a lot of box squatting and other work with chains and bands. We do not train raw. Except for warm-ups, we bench geared and we use boards from time to time. We workout five or six days a week, with limited assistance work on the days when we do none of the three lifts. When we start deadlifting, we change the assistance work or eliminate it altogether. Bill changes up the routines by using a lot of different methods—staggering, stuttering, dynamic and conjugate methods to name a few that I remember him mentioning.

### Do you follow any special nutritional program?

I can blow up pretty quickly if my nutrition is neglected, so my normal diet is mostly protein, a few carbs, and little sugar or fat. Before a contest

photos courtesy Bob Gaynor and April Shumaker

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this gets pretty strict until I am eating almost all protein.

## How many different federations do you lift in?

Currently, we lift in the USAPL and the USPF, but I may also lift in the APF a few times because I want to try lifting in multi-ply gear. I might lift in the USPF D2 if I can find such a meet. Although I do have issues with different federations, I am happy to have the venues in which to compete.

## Do you feel women are treated the same as men in powerlifting?

Not at all. Women need to compete in the same contests as the men on the National stage, not in separate meets. To me, separate meets are divisive and compete for the scarce resources of public attention and interest. Women need to be equal partners on the platform with the men. The public will notice us only if we are in front of them. They are not going to travel to this contest to see the men and to that contest to see the women. Certainly the media will remain less motivated to cover us. They are not going to search us out or go looking for us—we need to present ourselves to them and show them how great this sport can really be. Look, the greatest national meets that I have ever been in were combined Nationals—nothing else even comes close. For example, those USPF Senior Nationals run by Robert Keller at the airport Marriott in Philadelphia in '96 and '97 were two of the greatest meets that I have ever lifted in. It was fantastic to see my picture in PL USA with the great James Henderson and to meet and compete with Kirk Karwoski, Ed Coan and the other legends of the sport. None of that would have happened if the women lifted alone. Most recently, the American Cup at the LA Fitness Expo, run by Steve Denison, was another great meet. Split them up into separate men and women contests and we have less—much less. This sport keeps harping about unity, but it can't even unify itself at a National Championships?

## Has this treatment of women improved or not during your career?

I think that it has its ups and downs, but, in general, I see no real improvement in this regard.

## When you lift equipped, what brand of equipment do you use?

I am sponsored by Lifting Large, so my primary gear is Titan, but I also use Inzer and Metal gear for many things. Mike and Teal Adelman run a great shop with Lifting Large. Very fast and friendly and I am very grateful for their support.

## How would you advise someone new to the sport?

Put in the work and take a long-term view of your progress. Avoid doing too much and causing injury. An injury can end your career, and severely limit your potential forever. If you can remain injury free, you can lift forever.

## What are common mistakes you see lifters make?

Using too much weight in poor form, losing

too much bodyweight to make the weight class, opening too heavy, and being too impatient. All of these are ego-driven mistakes. Leave your ego at home and work hard. Did I mention using too much weight? And avoid listening to negative people. You will get nowhere by listening to them.

## Is the Internet good or bad for powerlifting?

The Internet has had a profound effect on everything in the world today and powerlifting is no exception. It is great. It can remind you that your competitors are training all year, and you can even see videos of their training, plus you can study other people's form to help you with your own. You can even see how you stack up against them, in virtually real time. Twenty years ago you were on your own. You didn't even know if your competitor was still competing, or even working out. With the Internet, you can see pictures of the lifters when they are not lifting and they look like any other men and women. Only a few really look good when they are lifting. This might encourage more women to compete and that is a good thing. I see whole families competing together at some meets and that is also a great thing. The Internet also has vast exposure and we can exploit that.

## What do you think of the current state of powerlifting?

Well, it is more fractured than before I took a leave to have children, and the major feds are definitely less affluent than before. When I first went to a world championship, our expenses were defrayed by the fed. When was the last time that anyone knew of a funded American team at the IPF Worlds—or any other Worlds—even in part? Uniforms are now required, and you pay for that yourself. We pay for the drug testing as part of our entry fee, but there is less testing done at the meets. Once when I competed, the top three finishers in every class were tested for steroids at the highest level meets.

## Do you think we will ever eliminate some of the current federations?

I believe that the feds have a lifespan of their own, and come and go in influence. The big three still seem to be around, although not in their original forms.

## Who are some of the lifters you have admired/respected?

Carrie Ann Boudreau was a phenomenal lifter in the 123s. Bill patterns a lot of his training around her squat form. Ann Leverett and I had a long and friendly rivalry and she is still winning big in the Masters division. Kirk Karwoski and Ed Coan were awesome lifters.

## What has been the biggest change in powerlifting during your career?

Well, the IPF kicked out the USPF while all were claiming that this would "unify" the sport. Okay, how did that work out for us? Are we now stronger? The different federations are not the problem—they are the symptom of a problem. Until the underlying problems are

resolved—if ever—there will continue to be different federations.

## Does a powerlifter need training partners to succeed?

I would say that it is commonly believed that everyone needs others to perform at their very best and that few, if any, can do everything on their own. Others provide feedback, encouragement, and motivation, not to mention physical support and camaraderie.

## What, if anything, can be done to make powerlifting more popular?

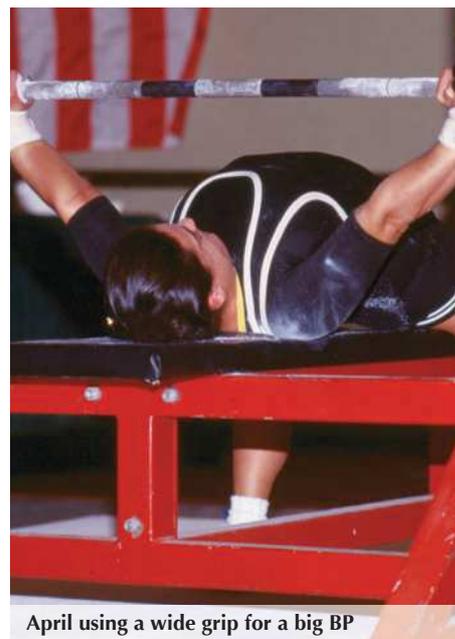
AS: Add prize money. Make the meets interesting and colorful while maintaining high and consistent standards of judging. People will go where the money is. I can't think of any successful sport that doesn't involve an opportunity to win money at some point. It could be added or included in the entry fee with the winner(s) getting the prize money.

## What has been your all-time favorite moment so far in your career?

Proving that you can come back to lifting on the national and international level after having children and taking ten years off. And for women, this is great. I have tried to prove these things and I believe that by using the correct training and exercise methods, and the correct nutrition, I have. I believe now that muscle does have memory and it does come back faster the second time around. Bill calls this neuromuscular memory, and I am sure that he is right.

## Do you have any additional comments?

I would like to thank PL USA for this interview. I have always wanted to do one. I want to thank my husband and trainer Bill for training, coaching and supporting me with my lifting all of these years. I also want to thank all of my friends who have helped me and wished me well over all of these years. ☺



April using a wide grip for a big BP