

Sakari Selkainaho recently spoke with Becca Swanson about a variety of powerlifting topics. This is her personal profile together with excerpts from the interview:

Personal Profile

Age: Late 20's

Occupation: Owner of Big Iron Gym, Omaha, NE, USA

Hobbies: "Oh, wish I could say there are some, but the gym eats all my time."

Family: Single

Hometown: Omaha, NE; originally from Papillion, NE

Website: www.beccaswanson.com

Best competition lifts:

867.5 kg/ 1912.5 lb Total

382.5 kg/843.2 lb Squat

227.5 kg/501.5 lb Bench

295 kg/650.3 lb Deadlift

Sakari Selkainaho: How did you get involved in weight training?

Becca Swanson: I was in college looking for something athletic to do. I was sent to Missouri for a summer to work for a company. That is when I joined a local gym. That is also when I realized I needed to learn how to lift weights.

Sakari Selkainaho: What was your first involvement with powerlifting?

Becca Swanson: I came back to college in Nebraska. I joined a hardcore gym in Omaha. That day I met my current coach, Rick Hussey. He said, "Here, try this." It was a deadlift. I ended up lifting 250 lbs. my first day. From then on I was hooked. It is so easy to be serious about something you are good at.

Sakari Selkainaho: What other sports have you tried?

Becca Swanson: I always participated in sports growing up. I tried my hand at softball, basketball, diving and high jump. I was dedicated to volleyball throughout high school. I played a bit in college, but looking back I see I was not great at the sport because it wasn't in my blood like powerlifting is.

Sakari Selkainaho: How did you train at first?

Becca Swanson: I have the same coach 9 years later. I train the same. It seems to be working for us.

Sakari Selkainaho: In your last meets the numbers have moved up fast, so you found something that works well. What were the major changes?

Becca Swanson: It is a combination of gear evolution, technique improvements and an increase in bodyweight. I am lucky to be a lifter hitting my peak at a time when lifting gear has improved dramatically. The trick is learning to use the gear, and consistent practice. My bench has improved because Rick has me pounding my triceps with heavy, heavy overload weight. Plus, I improved my arch, so I can use my back more efficiently in the bench press. Moving my bodyweight from 230 to 240 was a big help. I filled out my gear better. Rick said, "If you want bigger numbers, you need to be bigger."

Sakari Selkainaho: You have visited Westside Barbell a few times. How did you like training there?

Becca Swanson: Louie Simmons did teach me a new dumbbell triceps movement that I incorporated into my routine. Other than that, I never lifted there, just observed.

INTERVIEW

Personal dialogue between
PL USA Magazine and the
Sport's Greatest Names.

BECCA SWANSON

interviewed by Sakari Selkainaho for Powerlifting USA



Becca Swanson has been breaking through one amazing barrier after another in the squat.

I am not big on band work; I only use bands for tricep lockouts. People seem to be unstable when using bands on squat and deadlift. Westside has training techniques very different from mine. It is fun to watch.

Sakari Selkainaho: The competition and atmosphere at Westside is something else, right?

Becca Swanson: We have an atmosphere second to none at Big Iron Gym. Westside is similar.

Sakari Selkainaho: You have your own Gym business?

Becca Swanson: Yep, Big Iron Gym in Omaha, Nebraska. We have been here for 5 years. Rick and I run it together.

Sakari Selkainaho: Is it an all-around gym or just a powerlifting gym?

Becca Swanson: We are just a smaller version of any other gym. The differences are: we have a deadlift platform, 3 flat benches, 5 places to squat including two Monolifts, chalk and baby powder are acceptable, and mild cursing is fine. Only 15% of our lifters are powerlifters.

Sakari Selkainaho: You also have a very good powerlifting team, tell me about that.

Becca Swanson: The lifters at Big Iron Gym are lucky enough to have Rick Hussey as a coach. He is like the Dad who puts shame into lifters who don't give 100% without having said a word. He never lets a lifter think he/she has done her best. Rick puts high demands on his lifters inside the gym and expects them to behave outside the gym.

Sakari Selkainaho: Many of you have done well lately.

Becca Swanson: "Consistency is the key." That is my motto, because that is how I became the lifter I am today. Some of our guys have been going and going for 3-5 years, no breaks. That is what it takes. Plus, we have been travelling to meets and keeping our ears open - we learn.

Sakari Selkainaho: What do you think about lifting gear in general?

Becca Swanson: Like I said, we are involved with a major evolutionary period right now. We are all lucky to have this advantage, if we choose to use it.

Sakari Selkainaho: What type of lifts have you done raw...training or at meets?

Becca Swanson: I do not risk injury trying to find out what I can do raw. When I am in a heavy training cycle, I can bench about 350 lbs., I can squat 650 lbs. and deadlift 575 lbs.

Sakari Selkainaho: Any other big training lifts?

Becca Swanson: I have video of myself squatting 770 x 2 and deadlifting 635 x 2.

Sakari Selkainaho: Any thoughts about the status of powerlifting in general...federations, meets, testing?

Becca Swanson: I am a lifter. I feel my job as a lifter is to encourage continued progression of female powerlifting and physical strength overall. Federations are great. I am grateful to have found one that
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A 500 lb. Bench Press for a Woman was almost unthinkable ... Becca went and did it!

accepts me and that I accept. I love APF meets, always fun and high energy. As far as forming opinions about conflicts between federations, that is territory I prefer not to venture into.

Sakari Selkainaho: What negative things would you eliminate?

Becca Swanson: I chose not to think of any negative.

Sakari Selkainaho: Do you see any differences between men's and women's training?

Becca Swanson: Men and women at Big Iron train no different. Women just need to make smaller jumps in weight when getting close to their max.

Sakari Selkainaho: You have also done some strongwoman meets, did you like those?

Becca Swanson: I don't like the lack of a consistent and fair qualification process. The best girls get cheated out of competing at the Worlds. I work off of breaking barriers and records. In strongwoman I never found a base of records or numbers to go off of because each contest's implements are so different. I like the athletic training that strongwomen requires. I liked the fact that I could train outside, but they are two different sports. Like I said before, powerlifting is in my blood.

Sakari Selkainaho: Any future plans, the world's strongest woman contest perhaps?

Becca Swanson: The qualification process is not what it seems. I was forbidden to go in prior years because Doug Edmonds said he would never invite me. Then when he was losing his ass on the crappy show he had in 2003, he thought he might be able to use me in 2004. I even considered it, but my body decided to break this year. I am recovering from bicep surgery on both arms. So, I have no plans for



Becca has proven to be the best at every lift she tries!

strongwoman.

Sakari Selkainaho: You have a video together with Jill Mills?

Becca Swanson: Yep, that is one of the greatest projects I have ever done. I am going to cherish the videos and the photo shoot pictures for the rest of time. Jill is a great athlete and an even better friend. The videos are for sale on our websites, www.beccaswanson.com and www.jillmills.com.

Sakari Selkainaho: How do you see a value of proper nutrition for powerlifters?

Becca Swanson: I am sure there is value in proper nutrition. I haven't gotten to a plateau where I need to focus there. Yet, I would say 95% of powerlifters do need to focus on proper nutrition.

Sakari Selkainaho: What type of diet do you follow personally?

Becca Swanson: I just make sure I get plenty of protein throughout the entire day: breakfast, lunch, dinner and in between. Other than that, I need really high carb and fat to maintain a bodyweight of 240 lbs. Cookies are my favorite diet supplement.

Sakari Selkainaho: How has it affected your own training?

Becca Swanson: My increased bodyweight has been one of the keys to my success in late 2003 and into 2004.

Sakari Selkainaho: Do you use any supplements?

Becca Swanson: I am really happy with the bodyweight increase FSI Effervescent Creatine has given me. I don't think I could have maintained 240 lbs. without it. I also use their multi-vitamin and glutamine, faithfully.

Sakari Selkainaho: How do lifters look up to you?

Becca Swanson: I get positive feedback from men and women at all levels, I think because I have taken records by hundreds of pounds. When I lift, I never stop fighting, and people find inspiration in that. I feel lucky to be in a position where I can inspire others. I am lucky to have found what I am good at.

Sakari Selkainaho: How do you spend your spare time between work and training?

Becca Swanson: Since we own our own gym, there is no such thing as spare time. I am at the gym 12-14 hours a day.

Sakari Selkainaho: You now hold the biggest all time numbers in every powerlift. What is your next goal?

Becca Swanson: I know this is a disappointing answer, but since I am injured, I just need to focus on healing up above anything else.

Sakari Selkainaho: How do you stay motivated?

Becca Swanson: I go for the numbers. I break barriers. I am also motivated by the fear of not improving.

Sakari Selkainaho: Any final comments?

Becca Swanson: Powerlifting is such a great sport. A person can be any age, sex, height or weight to compete. This sport is continually gratifying. You definitely get out of it what you put in.

Sakari Selkainaho: Becca, thanks for the interview and all the best for your career. Heal fast.