

**Chris Duffin goes RAW + Strongman Brian Shaw**

# POWER

MAY/JUNE 2014



## **GREG PANORA**

**Don't Call It A Comeback**

MAY/JUNE 2014 • VOL. 5, NO. 3

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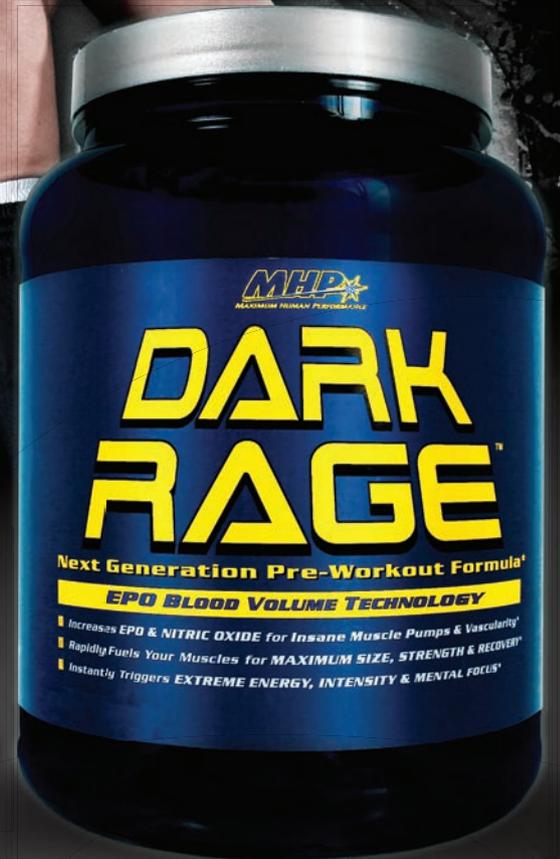
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## Greg Panora Issue

Big thanks goes out to Matt Vincent for interviewing one of the Worlds Strongest Men, Brian Shaw. I recall literally banging into Brian as I was walking into a hotel down in LA once. My face bumped into his bicep as I was walking with my head up my A\$\$\$. I remember thinking I should get the license plate number of the truck that just ran over my face. As I turned around to say excuse me, I realized I didn't bump into any normal human. This was a giant.

Luckily for me, Mr. Shaw said, "Sorry man, I didn't see you there." At the time Brian was probably every bit of 6-foot-8 and 350- 360 lbs. These days Brian is well over 400 lbs. and one of the best Strongman competitors on the planet. Brian has the strength to match his overwhelming size. In training, he successfully nailed a 975-lb. deadlift. That's a long way to lift when 6 feet, 8 inches. At Power HQ, we are working hard to make sure we always have a Strongman interview or article represented in every issue.

Greg Panora was a dominant force in powerlifting for a good five or six-years. When he was at Westside Barbell, he impressed many – including myself – with his brute strength, and had a few all-time world records. Some years later Greg fell off a bit and went through some very tough times, including homelessness, and his life was even threatened by a stroke. Greg is now part of a comeback story that would make Rocky Balboa jealous. Perhaps this is the greatest powerlifting comeback story of all time. Greg is back and he's stronger than ever, capturing a top-three total with 2,000 lbs. at 242, and he's just getting started.

I'm big, I'm bad, I'm pretty? Umm, ok. Strongman athlete Robert Oberst has written an article about how awesome he is. This is all just according to himself, though.

The 220-lb. world record-holding bencher Adrian Larsen shares some secrets to how he benches big.

Speaking of the 220-lb. weight class, how about Chris Duffin nailing a 859-lb. all-time raw world record squat? That was amazing. Chris writes about a need for speed, and how important it was for his success.

That's all from Power/Sling Shot HQ. Follow me on Instagram to stay in the loop on all the new happenings: @MarkSmellyBell.

### Mark Bell

*Sent from my iPhone 6 and Sling Shot HQ*

www.HowMuchYaBench.net  
www.ThePowermagazine.com  
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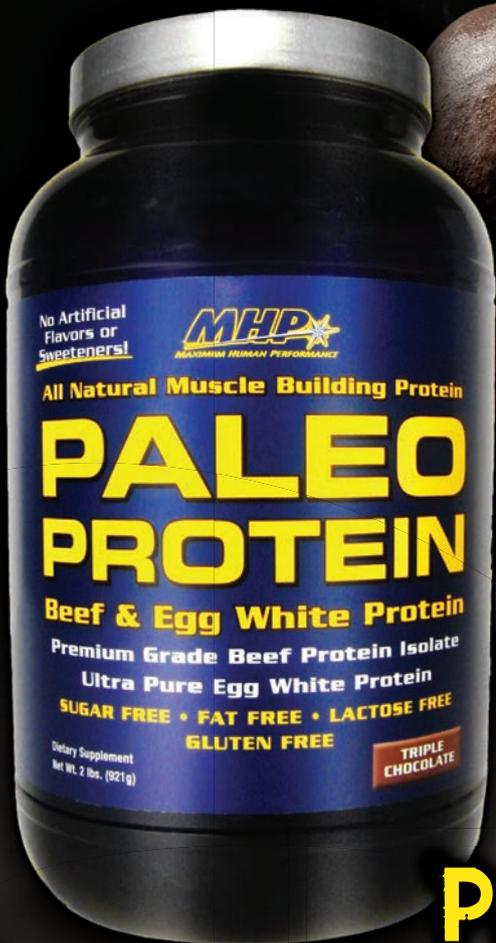
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## FEATURES



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#### Greg Panora

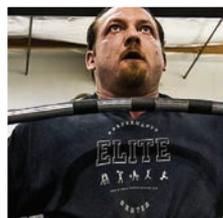
He was one of the best powerlifters in the world. But after suffering a stroke, he stepped off the platform for a few years. Now Greg Panora is back and chatting with Jeff "Robot" Irion about how he is working his way back to the top.



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#### Derek Kendall

If you haven't heard of Derek Kendall, then you haven't used social media in the past few months. This big man is taking the powerlifting world by storm as he closes in on the all-time squat record. Mr. Robot Pants will fill you in on all the details.



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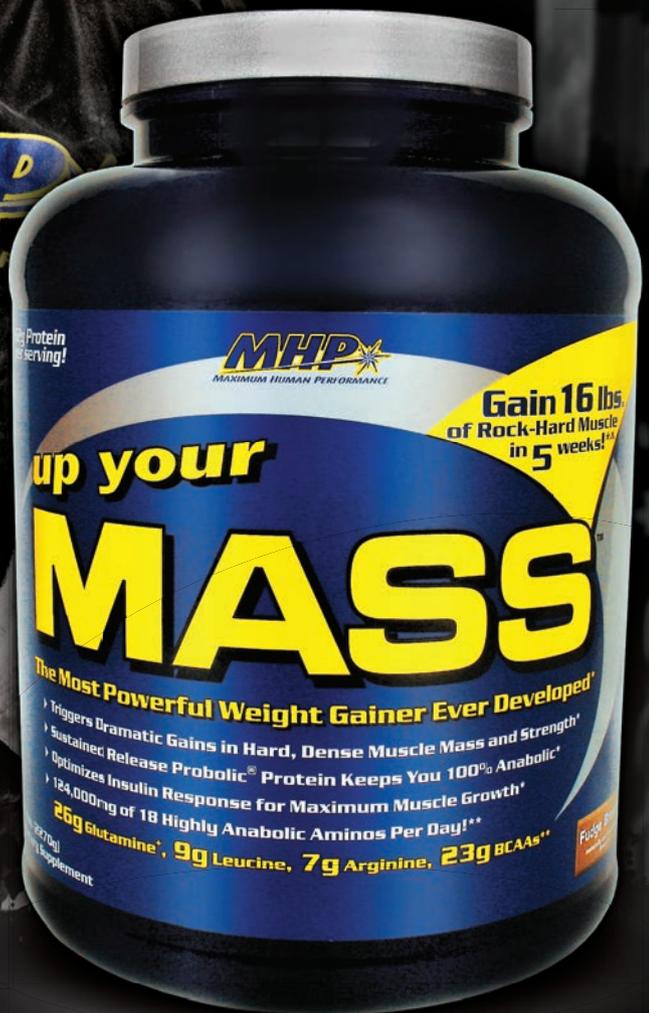
Matt Vincent sits down with "World's Strongest Man" Brian Shaw as he prepares to compete at the 2014 Arnold Fitness Expo and World's Strongest Man.

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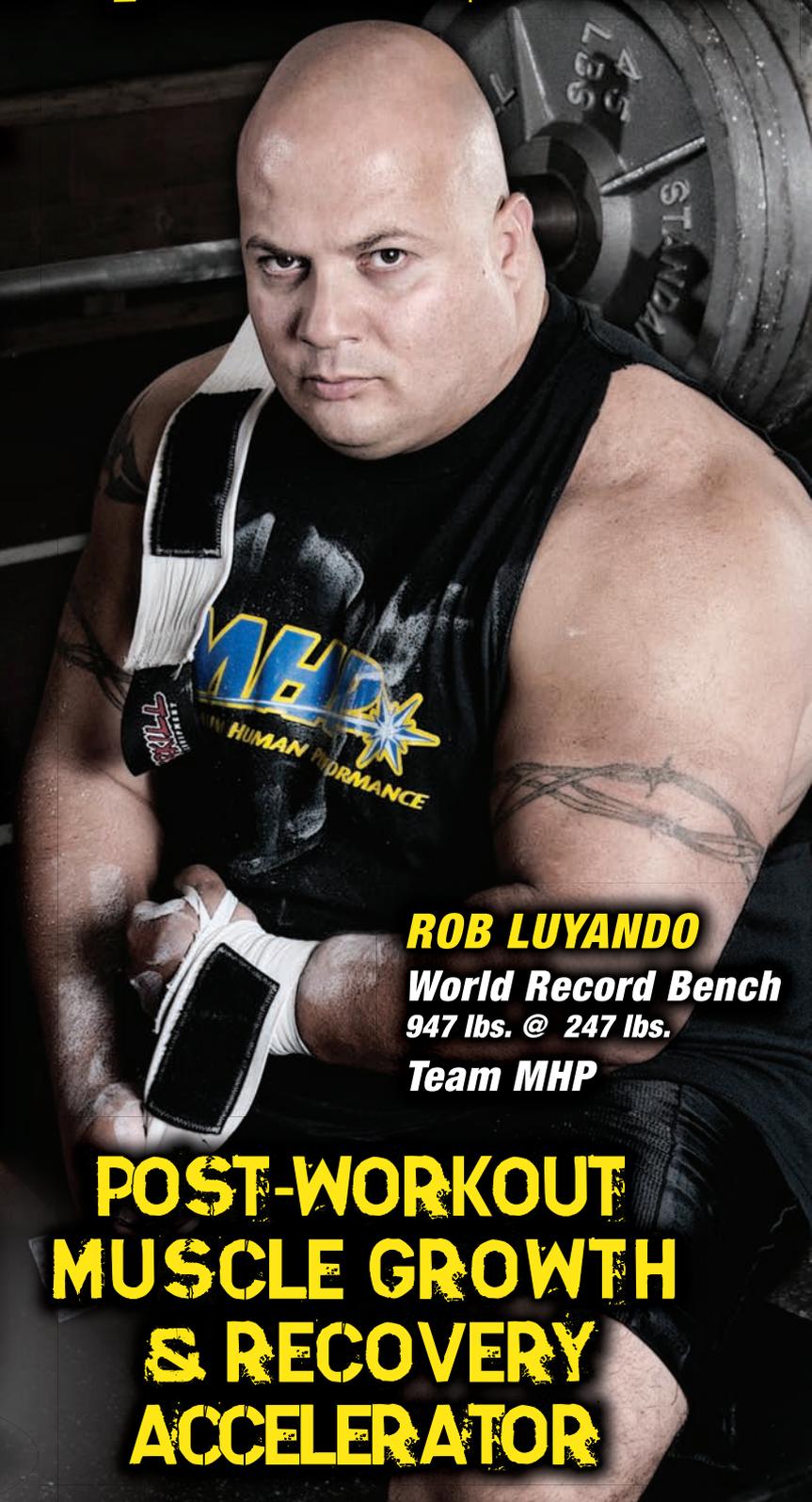
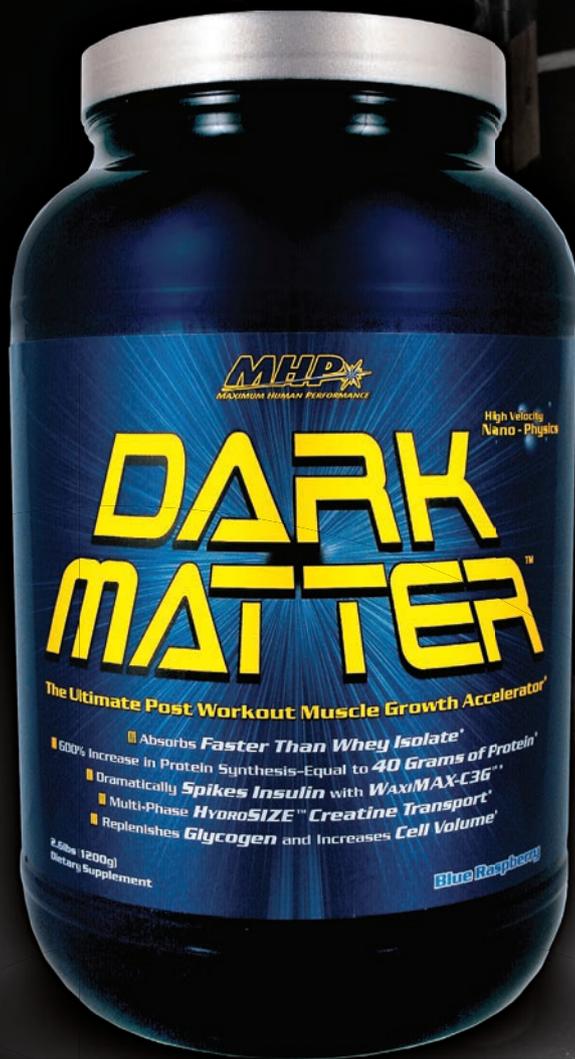
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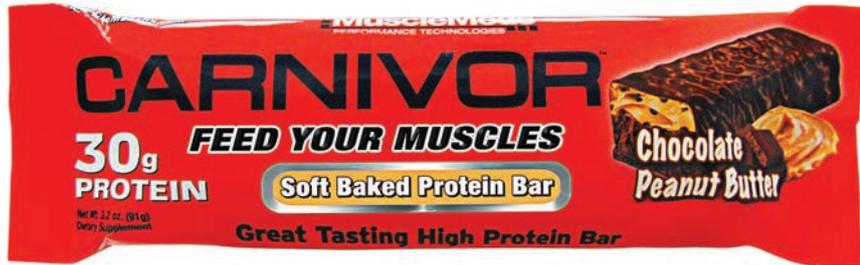
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# THIS CHICK CAN KICK YOUR ASS... AND YOU MAY LIKE IT!

# CHRISTMAS ABBOTT

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**How old are you, where are you from and what are you wearing?** I'm 32, from Lynchburg, Va., and wearing boy shorts and a loose tank.

**Where do you train?** I train at CrossFit Invoke in Raleigh, N.C.

**Do you lift with other girls, or is it all guys?** I lift with both. Girls are fun to lift with because they understand other girls, but the guys really push you.

**What do you do for work?** I own CrossFit Invoke, I have a workshop series about nutrition and training (found on ChristmasAbbott.co), and am a professional athlete. I do a lot of fitness photo shoots, MC events and various guest appearances on shows.

**How did you get involved in powerlifting?** I was exposed to lifting around eight years ago. I fell in love immediately and haven't looked back.

**What do your "normal" friends think of how much you can lift?** My "normal" friends all lift with me now! It's a fun place to be any time of the day.

**When you go to a powerlifting meet with a room full of men with massive levels of testosterone, do you feel like the center of attention?** If I pay attention to them I can feel like the center of attention. But when I go to a meet, I'm there to smash weight and take podiums.

**Are you married, have a boyfriend or single?** I have a boyfriend who loves lifting as much as I do. It's important that he understands my lifestyle and passion.



**Do you remember the first time you out-lifted a boy?** How did it make you feel? I do that daily at the gym I own. I like to lift beside the guys who want to lift more than they should. Technique will get you far, and a little fun competition always makes things interesting.

**Do you wear makeup to the gym?** I wear lip gloss all the time. Who said you can't look pretty and lift heavy weights? Whoever they were doesn't lift with me.

**What do you have to say to women who don't lift weights because they think they'll get too big?** I laugh a little when I hear this. Usually it's a lady who has just complimented me on my physique. I playfully tell them that if they want the physique I have, they have to lift weights.

**How has powerlifting helped you?** It's a great foundation for raw strength. As a tiny person (5-foot-3 and 118 lbs.),



I have to be stronger than the rest to keep up and hold my own. Lifting has helped that strength develop and transferred into my other regimens.

**What is your favorite lift?**

Deadlift! "I pick things up, I put things down."

**Tell us about your current best lifts.** I lie to myself and tell myself they are 10 lbs. lighter than what they are, that I'm the boss and I own that weight. I know I've really moved some weight when it takes me a minute to recover and see straight afterward.

**What are some of your powerlifting goals?** To smash as much as I can. True statement.

**Anything else you'd like to add?** Lifting makes you sexy. You

can be a damsel in distress and need someone to take care of you, or you can take care of yourself and be a Ms. Boss about it. I prefer to be a boss. **PM**



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# CANADIAN POWERLIFTER SHANE CHURCH

BY KEN WHETHAM

There must be something in the water near the Ottawa area that makes guys want to lift heavy weight and compete in strength sports. This is the third time I've traveled to our capital to interview a powerlifter and, although I tried to drink the Ottawa water in the hopes of boosting my strength, to my disappointment my bench didn't go up much. I guess I'll just have to keep training to get stronger.

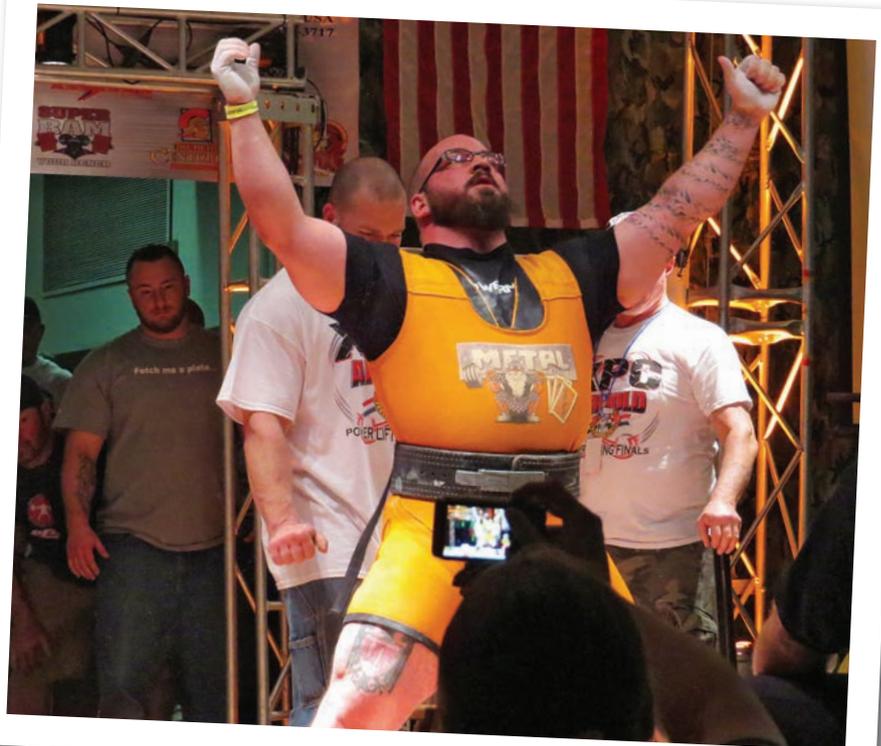
I met Shane Church a few years ago. He was the first person I witnessed squat more than 1,000 lbs. Not unlike most powerlifters, Church is one of the nicest people to talk to, a person who puts family first and who is more than willing to help anyone get stronger and achieve their goals. I had the opportunity to talk to him at his in-laws' house, where we were spoiled with great company and an awesome roast beef dinner.

**POWER: First, introduce yourself. Where are you located in Canada, how old are you and what do you do for a living?**

**CHURCH:** My name is Shane Church. I am 30 years old and live in our Nations Capital, Ottawa Ontario, with my better half, Shannon, and the new addition to our family, my son Odin. I'm currently employed as an Information Center Specialist at a secure document storage warehouse.

**What are your current rankings and records?**

**CHURCH:** Currently I'm 13th all



time overall in the squat with a 1,036, and my total is 25th all time overall with 2,402 in the 242s.

**POWER: How long have you been powerlifting?**

**CHURCH:** I started lifting in 2006 with Paul Vaillancourt. He is one of Canada's best Strongmen and owns two gyms in the Ottawa area. I was working at a plant as an industrial firefighter and one of our work benefits was to have a gym membership to ensure we kept in decent physical condition. I went to Paul's gym, Ulti-

mate Fitness, where I met him, and he immediately invited me to start training with him. Paul convinced me to enter into a Strongman competition. In the winter of that year, Paul, his wife, Sarah Leighton, and I entered a powerlifting competition and I was hooked on the sport. My first meet was in single-ply gear and I squatted 565, benched 385 and deadlifted 550. I competed for about a year in single-ply and actually competed in a multi-ply event in single-ply gear before I started getting into multi-ply.

**POWER:** What got you interested in the sport?

**CHURCH:** Paul Vaillancourt. Besides Paul, the thrill of competing is as addicting as crystal meth, or so I'm told. I played pretty much every sport you can think of growing up: hockey, baseball, basketball, wrestling, rugby, soccer and track and field. I love competing and making new friends from all over North America and Europe.

**POWER:** Have you always competed in gear, and have you ever considered lifting raw?

**CHURCH:** I've done one meet raw because I ruined my bench shirt right before a planned meet, and I had already paid my registration. It was fun to try, but I consider myself a gear whore and I plan on continuing to lift in the gear.

**POWER:** What is your most memorable competition and why?

**CHURCH:** The first one would be competing at the Arnold in 2013 because of the incredible location and the caliber of lifters I got to compete with. Lifting with legends like Brian Carroll, Al Mehan, Evengy Yarmbash and Henry Thomason. I placed second in the 242s with a 2,360. The second most memorable competition was this past November when I competed at a meet in Long Island, N.Y., with my wife, who competed in her second powerlifting meet.

**POWER:** Do you think large quantities of Canadian bacon, beer and maple syrup consumption are some of the best kept post workout training secrets that Canadian lifters don't want anyone to find out about?

**CHURCH:** Maple syrup is the key to everything in life. It's definitely necessary to eat lots of bacon post-workout, pre-workout and intra-workout. It's just sometimes a little tough to get the bacon to mix properly in the shaker bottle. Maybe we need to invent a "bacon maple syrup" sports recovery drink.



**POWER:** Have you ever suffered any significant injuries during your powerlifting career?

**CHURCH:** I've had two significant injuries that hampered my training for a while. I tore my hamstring and tore my bicep tendon. It took a while to repair my hamstring, I just had to take it easy training for a while. When I ruptured my bicep tendon (a 100-percent rupture of the distal tendon) I had to get surgery to repair it. My first cast was put on so tight I cut it off the same night. They put on a second cast but it only lasted two weeks before I cut it off. Four months post surgery I benched 600 lbs. I suffered a bulging disc in late 2013 and had to take intense A.R.T. and acupuncture for four weeks before I could start lifting again. I had arthroscopic surgery on my left knee last summer, as well. I'm 100 percent healthy now and plan to stay that way (fingers crossed and knock on wood).

**POWER:** Where do you train, and do you have a coach or training partners?

**CHURCH:** I train during the week at a commercial gym in Ottawa with

my wife, who is a personal trainer. On the weekends I train at Dynamo Barbell with some of the best Canadian raw lifters ever, Jay Nera, Kade Weber, Paul Oneid, Chadwick Haines and of course my beautiful wife.

**POWER:** Do you have a particular training protocol that you follow, like Westside, Cube or 5-3-1?

**CHURCH:** I started with Wendler's 5-3-1, which got me established to a good level of strength. But once I started lifting in gear I changed my training to follow the Westside training protocol. I was fortunate to have had an opportunity to move to Columbus, Ohio, and train with Louie Simmons and the Westside Crew for nine months. I moved in with AJ Roberts and Jake Anderson. There was more than a few tons of food consumed at our place! It was one of the most amazing and humbling experiences of my life. The week I moved I had finished third at the CPF Nationals in Canada, and when I got to Westside, I was the weakest guy in the gym. Very humbling. I learned so much about life, humility and being

a better person, and I also learned a ton about powerlifting. The biggest improvements I made at Westside were to my deadlift, from low 600s to more than 700 just with simple technique adjustments.

I still follow a similar method, but I don't have access to all the different bars so it's a little more simplified. I usually try to work up to a heavy single, double or triple with all my lifts and then back down to 80 percent and do a 5X5. I'm also working on a lot of things that I suck at, like raw squats, incline bench, ab work and anything else that makes me feel weak.

My typical week looks like this:

**Day 1:** Squat variation: raw squat, box squat, squats with wraps, full geared squats and bottom position squats. I work up to a heavy triple, double or single. I change it up every week, which follows the conjugate method. I then drop down to do 80, 70 or 60 percent of the number hit that day for a set of 5x5. After that I train quads and abs.

**Day 2:** Incline bench: same theory as the squat; work up to a max set of reps and then back down and do a 5X5 set. Accessories work follows for the chest and arms. Chest work includes ultra-wide grip bench, dumbbell work (flat and inclined) as well as close grip bench, tricep press downs, skull crushers etc.

**Day 3:** Deadlift variation: I train both with a conventional and sumo stance from the floor, block pulls and deficit pulls to work a variety range of motion. The same theory applies, work up to a heavy set and then back off to finish with a set of 5X5. Accessories work may include stiff legged deadlifts, glute ham raises or reverse hypers, and I'll finish with some mobility work.

**Day 4:** Bench variation: I train flat and inclined barbell bench as well as dumbbell flat, inclined and declined bench. My accessory work is pri-



marily for shoulders and back. I'll do a variety of military presses, pull ups, barbell rows, dumbbell rows and try to hit my shoulders, lats and triceps to help increase my bench.

**POWER:** Are you a sponsored athlete?

**CHURCH:** I am extremely fortunate to have two amazing sponsors. SD Pharmaceuticals is a Canadian supplement company that has top-of-the-market quality products, my favorite being the Dendrobium. I am also sponsored by EliteFTS. Being a member of Team EliteFTS was a career goal of mine back around 2008 when I first started reading about the exploits of their team members. The training logs on EliteFTS were like our gospel for training and getting strong. I remember running in the gym and yelling "did you see what Wendler did? Did you see Vinny Dizenzo bench a million pounds? Look how sexy Joey Smith is! Do you think Matt Kroc is real?" It is an honor for me to represent EliteFTS and Dave Tate.

The most bad-ass part is being in the same circles as lifters like Brian Carroll, Steve Goggins, Matt Kroczaleski, Joey Smith and, of course, Dave Tate.

**POWER:** Do you think a "Beaver" as the National Canadian symbol is kind of lame?

**CHURCH:** No, it's fantastic. Have you ever seen the complexity that beavers use to build a damn or their beaver house? It's equivalent to using duck tape and mud to build a condominium complex. Beavers are awesome!

**POWER:** What is the best thing about being a Canadian?

**CHURCH:** Free health care! There's a lot more but that's the best part.

**POWER:** Do you utilize any accommodating resistance, like bands or chains in your training?

**CHURCH:** I use a lot of EliteFTS bands in my training. I train with bands for both my squats and deadlifts to add a dynamic element to my lifting. Deadlifting with bands definitely helps me work on my lockouts, and squatting

with bands is beneficial for creating more explosive squat power. I also use bands for mobility work for upper body and lower body as well as utilizing them to help with stretching and flexibility.

**POWER: Do you follow any specific nutrition plan to keep strong for powerlifting?**

**CHURCH:** Nope. Shannon wishes that I would work with Shelby Starnes again. When we first met, I was working with Starnes and I was lean and jacked. Now I look like a stereotypical powerlifter, a little heavy but damn handsome! You can't have your cake and eat it too, unless you're a strength athlete.

**POWER: How do you prepare mentally for an attempt?**

**CHURCH:** Relax. Focus with a smile on my face. I have tried the angry lifter smashing the bar and it doesn't work for me. I'm a gear whore, so my technique needs to be bang on. Freaking out at the bar for no reason usually ended up in me missing weights horribly.

**POWER: What are your best competition numbers?**

**CHURCH:** Squat: 1,036; bench: 644; and deadlift: 749. Total: 2,402

**POWER: Best gym numbers?**

**CHURCH:** My gym numbers are actually a lot less than my meet numbers. I train a lot by myself, in a commercial gym. So, I have to eat a little humble pie when I'm walking out weights and wrapping my own knees.

**POWER: What are some of the changes you've made to your lifting over the years?**

**CHURCH:** I have changed a ton. I am always learning to get better. There are many ways to skin a cat. Because I'm doing something a certain way, that doesn't make it right. There are always different approaches or changes you can make that will help you progress. Getting strong doesn't happen overnight, it's a long process with many

hills and valleys.

**Who are some of the lifters you grew up admiring?**

**CHURCH:** The legend Ed Coan is my favorite. Scott Cartwright is bad-ass! I learned most of what I know from the Westside DVDs. Guys like Dave Tate, JL Holdsworth, the Chuck Voghapol and of course Louie Simmons. I also admired a lot of the great Strongmen too. Hugo Girard from Canada, my homeboy Paul V and Svend Karlson are probably my favorite Strongmen.

**Do you have any advice for someone entering the powerlifting game?**

**CHURCH:** Be prepared to learn from anyone and everyone. Every person has done something that you want to do. Learn from their mistakes and their successes and apply it to your own strategy.

**Do you still get excited and amped up when you go to compete at a meet?**

**CHURCH:** I can't sleep. Meet day is the best thing ever. I love seeing people break PRs and light bulbs go off when someone yelling a random cue "clicks" with someone.

**POWER: What is your favorite lift and why?**

**CHURCH:** The squat. It's the biggest number and it's my best lift.

**POWER: What do you do in your spare time?**

**CHURCH:** I am lucky to have the coolest kid in the world, Odin Benjamin Church. Odin is almost one year old and takes up most of my time, and I love it! I do get a chance to help people with programming their training as well, but it's more of a hobby.

**POWER: What's next? What are your goals for the immediate and distant future?**

I have the goal that I feel every lifter should have: to stay healthy. After that I want to become the best squatter in the 242s ever.

**POWER: Do you think it should be mandatory for all geared lifters**

**to shave their head and sport some type beard?**

**CHURCH:** Only the men.

**POWER: What drives you?**

Two things drive me. First is pressure. I have made big claims in the past I want this or I'm going to do that. I have to put my squat where my mouth is. The second is my son, Odin. I hope when he grows up I can be a hero in his eyes.

**POWER: If you had the choice of being any superhero, who would it be?**

**CHURCH:** He-Man. The dude is jacked, wields a giant sword and rides around a huge green cat. And the place that he protects is Castle Greyskull. Enough said.

**POWER: Now that you're at your current level of strength, do you get impatient trying to make specific gains?**

**CHURCH:** Of course! I want a 2,800-lb. total and I want it yesterday. But, I also realize that every time I get a PR, no matter how big or small it is, it gets me one step closer to reaching my goals.

**POWER: Is there anyone you would like to thank?**

**CHURCH:** Millions. The most important first is my parents. They have been amazing my entire life. Thank you. My wife, Shannon, for putting up with all my training, weight cuts and powerlifting meets. I'm also excited now that Shannon is getting addicted to competing in this sport. Matt and Julia Ladewski for being role models for Shannon and me in lifting and in parenting. They are two amazing people! My sponsors of course: SD Pharmaceuticals and EliteFTS, companies that have helped me get this far and hopefully further. All my training partners: Paul, Sarah, Jay, Kade, Willie, Paul and Martin. I'd also like to thank Mark and Andee Bell of Power for putting out a great magazine and giving me the opportunity for an interview. **PM**

# GREG PANORA

BY JEFF "ROBOT" IRION

**G**reg Panora is a lifter who needs no introduction. But in case you live under an Atlas stone, here's one anyway. Panora has held the world record total at both 242 and 275 pounds, with best lifts of a 1,060 squat, 820 bench, 820 deadlift and 2,630 total. He has won both WPO [World Powerlifting Organization] meets and Pro-Ams. He was away from the sport for a few years due to a stroke of bad luck, so to speak, but now he's back and doing big things in raw powerlifting.

**What's your age, weight and height?** I am 33; 5 feet, 10 inches tall. I weigh 257 lbs. in the offseason and compete in the 242-lb. weight class.

**When did you start training? Was it clear from the beginning that you were a strong dude and had the potential to do big things in powerlifting?** I started training at 13 because I was small. I don't know if I knew of any potential, but I knew that I loved it. It was the first (and last) thing that I've ever really cared about. I read every bodybuilding mag and all the powerlifting and Strongman articles I could find. So, not much has changed. I got strong very quickly and benched 405 the day I turned 16. The gym I was at made a plaque.

**When did you first compete? What type of equipment did you wear and what were your lifts?** I did my first contest raw at 18 or 19. I had gotten really lean and I think I weighed around 213 pounds. I squatted around 525, benched 435 and deadlifted 650. That was my introduction to pulling big deadlifts out of my ass to win.

**You once recommended that lifters start their powerlifting journey in a commercial gym, stick to the power rack and dumbbells, and get strong using minimal equipment. How long did you train in a commercial gym and what were your numbers when you graduated to a powerlifting gym?** I'm a huge believer in building a base. I get asked on Facebook all the time about suits and shirts and briefs. I look at some of these guys and think, "put some damn work in!" We live in a country where we want fast results. We are looking for a better pair of briefs or a better training method. Just get on a basic routine and eat some food! I trained at a YMCA until I went to Westside Barbell in 2006. When I got to use a monolift or deadlift bar at a contest, it felt amazing. I was a low 2,200-lb. totaler training alone at a commercial gym. It's amazing what being driven and working hard can get you.



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**In your opinion, when is it appropriate for a lifter to start getting into equipped powerlifting?** I think it's different from person to person, but I would say, spend at least two or three years building a base. I also believe in

training raw more often than equipped once in gear. Listen guys - gear is not that difficult to use. I have no clue how to use any of it and I got huge carry-over in it. Spend time getting stronger and less time blaming your squat suit.

**During your time at Westside, you took your total from low-2,200s to 2,630. What were the top three factors in this increase?** 3.) I had coaching for the first time. Louie was great at saying, "Greg, don't do that." 2.) I believed 100 percent in the methods. I still do. 3.) The most important part of Westside Barbell is how competitive it is there. I thrived in that kind of environment. I like to win.

**Your multi-ply squat form looked strange, maybe due to the way you'd hold the bar. It obviously worked for you, but what was the deal?** I have zero mobility in my shoulders.

**You were jacked and tan before being jacked and tan was cool. Would you call yourself a trendsetter?** Honestly, I like hot girls. Fat guys with big squats don't get hot girls. Most of my friends were not powerlifters. They were wannabe Jersey Shore guidos, so I had to fit in.

**How did you manage to get big and strong without getting fat? Did you stay lean in order to gain an advantage over your competition,**

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**or are you just a closet bodybuilder like Mark Bell?** I tried to put body-weight on. I'm still trying! I eat seven times a day and I'm pretty lazy, so I'm not sure what's going on.

**Can you give us an idea of what your diet looks like? Do you stick to clean foods?** I try to eat healthier. Basically steak, chicken, eggs, peanut butter, pasta (lots of pasta), sushi, Jag-ermeister, oatmeal and pizza or Mexican at least once a week. I don't do the supplement thing, mainly because I'm too lazy to learn about it.

**You've trained with some legendary lifters throughout your career. What are three of the top things you learned from them?** Most of my advice was from Louie, and most of his information was locked in riddles. He would always tell me, "The toughest pitbull leads the pack," and that was Louie for, "You need to lead this group." He really understands the game and knows how to prepare for a contest. I learned a lot from Matt Wenning about how to frame a workout and train optimally instead of being crazy and just killing myself. I spent



a ton of time watching Chuck V train, and he did a lot of bodybuilding style movements; I carried this into my own training.

**You were the king of the multi-ply world. Then in early 2010, you**

**decided to leave Westside. Tell us about that. Westside seems like so long ago.** It's funny what a few years can do. Louie and I were not doing so hot. I wanted to wear gear more often in training. If you know Louie, this is

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a big no-no. I'm watching Frankl over there at Big Iron continually making huge gains and I was leveling off a little bit. I really had no idea how to "use" equipment and figured that if I wore it more, I could learn it better and put up some gigantic numbers. Anyway, Louie and I got into a huge argument and I walked. In a lifetime of bad choices, that one is the top. I had worked so hard to get there and I let it all slip away. Anyway, I will always love Louie and thank him for everything he taught me. The man is a genius and I wish Westside nothing but the best.

**Wait a second... First you said "gear is not that difficult to use" and that lifters should "spend time getting stronger and less time blaming [their] squat suit." Now you're saying that you wanted to be like Frankl and "learn [the equipment] better and put up some gigantic numbers." Are you contradicting yourself?** I was waiting to get called out on that! OK, my thing was that I was already strong. I figured there

had to be some secret gear sorcery I needed to figure out. The gear is pretty easy to use. I hardly ever put it on. I figured if I wore it once a month, my numbers would move up.

**Fair enough. It seems like the message is that lifters should have a strong base before they worry too much about equipment. What came next for you?** So, I left Westside and lost all direction. I stopped really caring about anything. I was still training, kind of. I didn't have a clue where to go and what I was supposed to do. I had broken the world record a bunch of times, and no one really tells you what you're supposed to do after you reach your goal. Movies end right after you reach that goal, but life doesn't. I was in for the darkest two years of my life. My girlfriend and I broke up, which left me homeless. I ended up living in a one-room apartment with a buddy. My job wasn't paying me anymore, so I had to resort to bouncing at a little redneck bar. I was basically coming apart at the seams. On Mother's Day 2010, I had a massive stroke.

I lost function of my right arm/hand, I couldn't talk, and my vision was really blurry on my right side.

I'd always had higher blood pressure, but it came out of nowhere. I spent a week or so in the hospital and neurologists and doctors couldn't figure it out either. Anyway, it was the greatest thing to ever happen to me and I wouldn't trade the horrible year that I had after that, either. You really have no idea what's important until you lose everything.

**When you said you'd always had higher blood pressure, how high are you talking?** I can't remember numbers. I remember the doctor kind of panicking when I was in high school. Apparently, as an infant, doctors told my dad to keep an eye on it.

**What happened after the stroke?** My life completely fell apart. I spent 3 years going from place to place, job to job, girl to girl. Looking back on it, I was trying to fill the hole that had been powerlifting. I had trained for 18 years and then all of a sudden my stability was kicked out from under me. I stopped caring about anything and was basically just surviving. I spent some time in Florida continuing down the same path into oblivion. I started training again and I had a decent job, but I was miserable. I said, "F it" one day and drove back to Maine. I really wasn't sure where I was going or why. I had to find a reason to live again, I guess.

My first year in Maine was a mess. I just wasn't making enough to survive. I had no set address and I bounced from one couch to another. I was working 40 hours a week but I could barely survive. Towards the end, I was living in my car at a rest stop, my tooth was compacted and completely abscessing and I knew I had to do something. Looking back on it, I realize it's easy to say, "How did you not realize this until now?" I'm not sure. I was so broken and angry at that point that I couldn't see much.

I decided soon after to man the F up and actually become accountable for my actions. A friend helped me get a job at CrossFit that absolutely saved my life. I decided to use my anger to become successful and stop being a little bitch. People actually started lis-

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tening to me and my classes multiplied and turned into 1:1 sessions, which turned into group sessions. I haven't had a full day off in almost 3 weeks and a lot of days are 14-15 hours. Everytime I step on the platform, I think back to where I was 2 years ago. I could absolutely care less what anyone says about my lifting. I do this for myself and my family at CrossFit Casco Bay and my beautiful girlfriend, Dr. Melinda Hurt.

**In hindsight, do you think there's anything you could've done to prevent the stroke?** I definitely should have paid more attention to my blood pressure. I was warned but ignored it while in my teens. I thought I was invincible. Now I see a doctor every couple of months to make sure I'm OK, and I take blood pressure meds. So far, so good. Most recently I was told to cut my energy drink intake down.

**Did the stroke force you out of multi-ply lifting?** I lost wrist strength and couldn't hold anything more than

635 lbs. on a bench. My wrist would go limp. I also couldn't hold more than 400 lbs. on the deadlift. I probably could bench in a shirt now, but I've lost the desire. I had no plans to return to the sport, but Brandon Lilly started writing all this cool shit about raw lifting and I decided, what the hell? Plus this guy named Dan Green started to do some big things and I got interested again.

**When did you start training seriously for raw powerlifting?** I never really stopped training. I was still routinely benching 500 lbs. and squatting 600 for ugly reps. About a year and a half ago, I talked a couple of my CrossFit clients into doing a push/pull competition and I decided to join them. It felt amazing to be back on the platform and I started training hard right after that.

**After a three-year hiatus, you returned to full meet powerlifting in May and posted a 2,000 raw total. Why did you wait so long to**

**compete again?** For me, powerlifting isn't fun or a hobby. A lot of people say that, but I mean it. It's a drug for me. I get extreme highs and extreme lows. I needed to make sure I was ready for that again.

**Let's talk about your transition to raw lifting, one lift at a time, starting with the squat. You've written before about how you struggled to transition from geared to raw squatting. What was your biggest weak point and how did you bring it up?**

My biggest weakness wasn't really a muscle, but my brain. It was a huge fear of two things: 1.) Getting low is a horrifying feeling. The hole is an awful place for a slow/grinding lifter like myself. I had to come to terms with being a bad squatter. I'm a guy who used to routinely go over a grand, and now 405 is tough. I think it was harder on me because I'm so slow and my form had been so tailored for a suit/box. I would sit way back and drop until the suit grabbed me, push my knees out

and re-arch my back. Now, none of that really worked. 2.) My second biggest fear is/was failure.

**What technique changes did you make?** Unless you have the most flexible hips in the world, your feet are going to have to come in raw. You also have to get used to a much faster lift. I can't really sit back raw, so I push my hips back then descend down as opposed to continually pushing back throughout the lift.

**You're carrying the bar a little lower, and also moved your hands in a few inches. If you were to return to multi-ply, do you think you'd still use this new bar position and grip?**

My bar position in multi-ply was a guessing game once the straps came up. I couldn't feel it. I was coaching a friend at CrossFit a few months ago and he put the bar ultra-low. He looked very comfortable and I tried it with good results. I could actually arch my back. If I went back to multi-ply, then I would try to do this, but who knows what would happen?

**Since you've used the "C" word twice now, what are your thoughts on CrossFit?** I love CrossFit. I love anything that has to do with strength. I admire the athleticism and, more importantly, the asses on the girls. But seriously, it took guys off of Hammer Strength machines and girls off of the treadmill. CrossFit Casco Bay got me back into powerlifting, makes me money, made me my best friends and introduced me to my girlfriend. For me, CrossFit changed my life.

**Let's turn our attention to benchin'. Before we get into raw benching, let's harken back to a time when the plies were plentiful. You hit all of your biggest benches in a denim shirt and routinely benched 800-plus at a time when that wasn't common. What was your general game plan for benching in a shirt?** I benched raw 90 percent of the time and kept getting stronger.

**What technical cues do you use for raw benching?** My bench is 95 percent bar placement. If I hit that sweet spot, then it flies up. My raw and shirted benches look the same.

**Is that the reason why you were able to build your shirted bench by benching raw 90 percent of the**

**time?** I think it actually built my raw bench more than my shirted bench. My shirted bench really developed as a result of tons of extensions and triceps work.

**People say that shirted benching is all about lats and triceps, whereas raw benching is all about pecs and shoulders (and triceps). What do you say?** For me, both are lats, shoulders and triceps.

"I love CrossFit. I love anything that has to do with strength.

I admire the athleticism and, more importantly, the asses on the girls...

CrossFit Casco Bay got me back into powerlifting, makes me money, made me my best friends and introduced me to my girlfriend. For me, CrossFit changed my life"

**Given that you benched 405 on your 16th birthday, it's fair to say you've always been a strong raw bencher. To what do you attribute this?** It was always the most important lift to me. Squats and deads are annoying things I have to do to be a good powerlifter.

Moving on to the deadlift. As a conventional puller, did you have any difficulty transitioning from equipped to raw? Not really. The suit just cut off circulation in my balls.

**Wow! That could inspire one to pull more weight. What other differences did you find between pulling raw and in a suit?** I don't get the same speed off of the floor. I thought I had a deadlift suit figured out. I would get it super tight and cut the leg openings. It stayed super tight on the hips and weight would fly off the floor.

**We've talked about the three lifts**

**individually, now let's talk about your training as a whole. Give us an overview. What does your weekly training schedule look like? Do you have someone coaching you?**

**Are you following some type of program?** I do my own thing. Speed bench, deadlift reps, max-effort bench and speed squats alternated with reps squat. I don't believe in having a set plan for myself. I think of what I'm going to do in the shower before work. I go over weights and rep schemes in my head until something feels right. My training is an oddball mixture of Westside Bench and Cube-type squat and deadlift, with some bodybuilding thrown in. I guess it makes sense, as Louie Simmons, Brandon Lilly and Dorian Yates have been the three biggest motivators for me. I learned a ton of bench stuff from Robert Wilkerson, as well.

**That's an interesting mix of training methods: Westside, Cube and HIT [High Intensity Training] bodybuilding training. Tell us one key principle from each that you include in your training.** From Westside, conjugate training is just plain fun. Cube brought old-school hard training back and introduced me to pause squats. Bodybuilding helps keep me well rounded and uninjured.

**You've mentioned incorporating bodybuilding-style training a few times now. Are you just a vain SOB, or do you think it has benefits for powerlifting?** Louie made me do bodybuilding style workouts when I got there, and it's really worked to build size. I think it's helped me handle heavy weights and stay injury-free because nothing is weak.

**When you talk about bodybuilding training, is it anything fancy? Or is it just a few sets of isolation exercises thrown in at the end of workouts to help add size and prevent imbalances?** It's honestly to get a pump! It's really nothing fancy: dumbbell presses, crossovers, pull-ups, a ton of upper back work, shrugs, butt blaster and occasional Zumba classes. I feel like it's kept me uninjured and I also feel like I can fight from bad positions a little better because of it. I also do a ton of ab stuff, and that's really made my squat possible. I never feel



like I'm going forward and I can keep air in really awkward positions. I do V-ups, leg lifts with ankle weights and tons of weighted sit-ups.

**For a raw lifter, what are your thoughts on speed work for each of the three lifts?** I think they are great for myself because I'm a very slow lifter. I think it's not necessary for a beginner, though.

**Westside is big on using tons of variations of the big lifts, with box squats and accommodating resistance being perhaps the most prominent modifications. Do you feel that using a vast assortment of exercises is useful for raw lifting, or should a raw lifter stick more closely to the competition lifts?** I think it probably differs from person to person, but most top guys seem to do better with the competition lifts. Accommodating resistance focuses on making the top portion harder, since that's where gear cuts out, but raw lifting is primarily the bottom portion so I wouldn't do it every week. I get great results with a Westside-style bench program. I do mostly full range movements, though.

**You totaled 2,000 at 242 in your raw debut. What's next?** Well, last weekend I totaled 2,038 via a 771 squat, 512 bench and 755 deadlift, so I'm moving in the right direction.

Eventually I want to go face to face with that dude with long hair in the 242s. What's his name? It's going to take some time, but I'll get there. 2,100 is my immediate goal for 2014. I need to get my dead back above 800 and the rest should follow.

**Back up for a second. You happened on to a domestic dispute and punched out a window?!? What's the story there?**

One weekend I went to grab drinks with my girlfriend and another couple. I was in a really good mood as I had just received a lot of good news. I was even dancing, which is very unlike me as I'm a 260 pound white guy. We decided to go back to my girlfriend's place and have a few more drinks. As the night wrapped up, they called a cab and walked outside to leave. My friend, Bob, ran back in and was shouting that the guy upstairs was abusing his girlfriend in front of the window. We ran upstairs and I kicked the door off the frame and punched out a window. I lacerated a vein in my arm and bled all over the floor. Shortly after, the girl came down and tried to play it off that he was drunk and she said the wrong thing. I went ballistic at this point as she was basically a stupid kid who didn't get it. She asked at one point if we could be friends as

he is really scared right now. At this point I'm crazed - I want this guy's head on my living room table. I realize that she doesn't get it at all and she says goodnight and goes back [to her boyfriend]. At this point I feel like complete shit about everything. I feel like shit that this stupid young girl is living like this. I feel terrible that I was almost willing to give up a life I'd worked my ass off to build from shit. I feel bad that my girlfriend had to see me like that, as I make a point to never raise my voice to someone that important. I hate not knowing what the outcome of this is going to be. I feel like I turned into the guy I'd worked really hard to leave behind. I don't get in fights anymore or act on impulse, but that's exactly what I did.

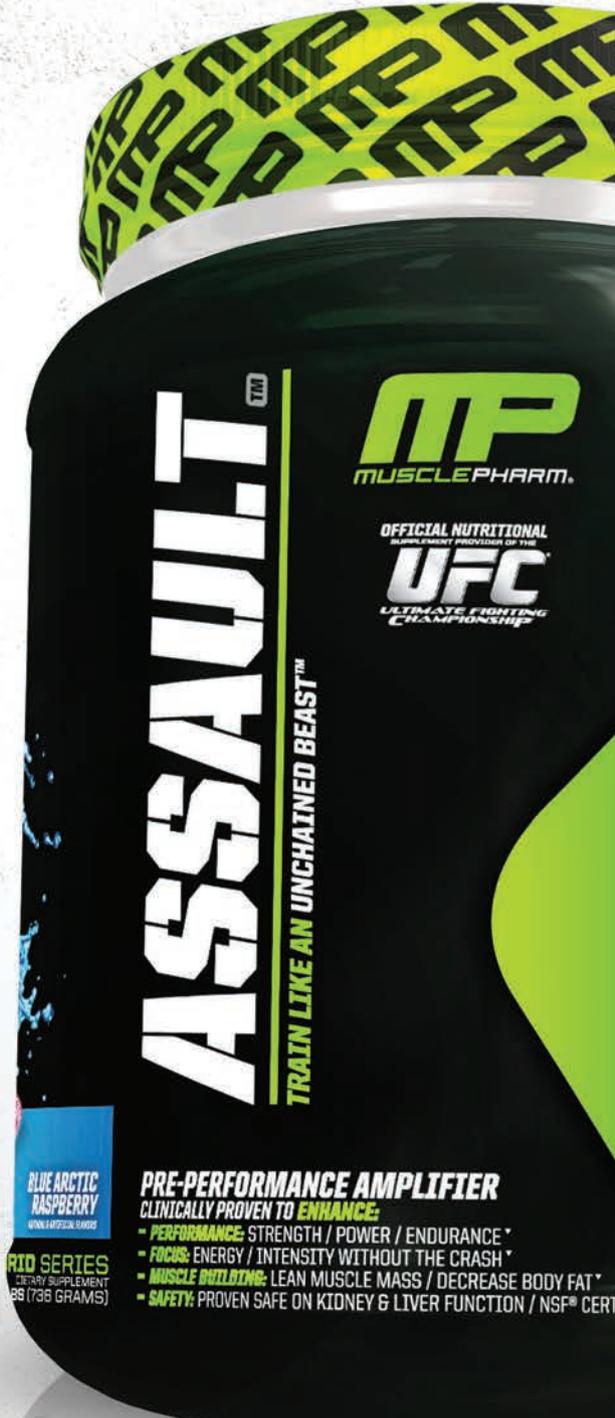
**On a more positive note, tell us about your volunteer work with pit bulls.** I train and became good friends with a guy named Frank Billings. Frank runs a dog daycare and a rescue called Buddy Up in Portland, Maine. I help out by getting abused dogs out of bad situations, occasionally going along to extract abused dogs. I have always felt a bond with pit bulls. It's not a "look at me, I'm a badass type of thing." I know what it's like to have to survive. I understand feeling completely misunderstood. We, as lifters, have one thing in common with these dogs: the media has completely destroyed our image and demonized masculinity in the same way that these assholes have turned pit bulls into savage beasts. If I hear one more person say, "pit bulls turn on their owners" or "I pick stuff up and put it down," I will flip out.

**Anyone you'd like to thank?** Honestly, I have so many people to thank. I wouldn't be here without Big Dan McNutt or Matt Brown. I have to thank my friends at CrossFit Casco Bay. You guys are my second family. My training partners at DynaMaxx, especially Mike Lawrence, for all of your help. Brandon Lilly and Chad Wesley Smith for believing that I might still have something to offer. My crew at Jugernaut for making me feel weak and constantly setting the bar higher. Last but not least, my girlfriend Melinda Hurt for using PT magic to keep me in this game a little longer and teaching me that I'm not that tough. **PM**



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# DEREK KENDALL

BY JEFF "ROBOT" IRION  
PHOTOS BY KEN RICHARDSON

**G**ive us some basic info. Who is Derek Kendall? I'm 30 years old and 6 feet tall. Right now, I'm about 345 pounds; I fluctuate between 335 and 345. My best gym lifts are a 975 squat, 585 paused bench and a 765 deadlift. My best competition lifts are a 937 squat, 573 bench and a 705 deadlift for a 2,215 total. That was on Nov. 16, 2013.

**Alright Mr. Kendall, or should we say Mr. Illinois 2011? You came out of nowhere and have established yourself as one of the strongest raw squatters in the world. Tell us about your training history.** I didn't really work out in high school. I played football in college at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, which was D3 [Division 3]. I graduated in 2007 and after that I started teaching; I teach P.E. and health at a K-8 [Kindergarten to Grade 8] school. I always wanted to do bodybuilding but I never knew what I was doing. My first show was the Illinois state show in May of 2011. I was in the super-heavyweights, weighing about 240. I won my class and the overall. My plan was to do another show, but I felt like I was at my limit. I didn't have the genetics to be at the top level. In October 2012, I started training for powerlifting. I met Ed Coan and started going to Quads Gym. My first meet was in March 2013. I competed in a belt only, no knee wraps competition. I squatted 755, benched 551 and deadlifted 642. My total was around 1,940. After that, I did my second meet in August. It was an APF [American Powerlifting Federation] meet, belt-only again, not even knee sleeves. I squatted 804, benched 545 and deadlifted 655 for a 2,006 total. My first meet with the Lilliebridges was my first meet in wraps.

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**Where do you train?** I train at Quads Gym twice a week. On Saturdays, I go to Jacked to train with the Lilliebridges for squat and deadlift. Sometimes I'll go on Thursday nights to bench with them, but they train late and I've got school the next day so that doesn't happen too often.

**What does your training look like?** I train three days a week, pretty much like how Eric Lilliebridge trains. Saturday is either a heavy deadlift or a heavy squat. I bench on either Wednesday or Thursday. I do accessories on Monday night, stuff like back and arms. I bench every week and squat/deadlift every other week.

**How has your training changed since you've started lifting with the Lilliebridges?** My training used to be linear periodization when I was lifting with Ed, but I was kind of overtraining, so we switched to squatting and deadlifting every other week. With the Lilliebridges, we start 10 weeks out from a meet and start with fives reps then move to threes and then singles. We add weight every couple of weeks and hit some singles before the meet. The biggest thing is that I'm resting more now, and as a result, my numbers have gone way up.

**You went from being unheard of to squatting 937 raw in competition. How has your squat progressed over the years?** When I was bodybuilding I used to do a lot of front squats and squats for reps. When I first started training for powerlifting, I was still caught up in reps. Of course, the monolift and knee wraps have helped a lot with adding pounds to my squat and I needed to learn the technique. Going from 755 to 937 was a matter of learning technique, using knee wraps and not overtraining.

**Your squat has exploded since you started training with the Lilliebridges. To what do you attribute this progress?** A lot of it has to do with training with them, in that environment. When I first went to Jacked I didn't even train with them, I was just watching them. I tried to stay with them. In the beginning, Eric always kicked my ass, but I was never more than a 10 or a 25-lb. plate away. After a while I was able to stay close to him. So yeah, lifting with Eric, having Ernie Sr. spot me and wrap my knees, and just the environment. I like working out at Jacked more than Quads - the environment is better and there are a lot of strong guys. You can't help but

push yourself. The first time I went there, they put me in wraps and I did 800. I'd never even been in wraps before. From there we added weight.

**Is it true that the secret to the Lilliebridge method is training in your singlet?** It works for them and it's working for you! It's funny - all the guys at Quads used to make fun of me for watching every one of Eric's videos. I'd wear my singlet at Quads and they'd make fun of me for that too. When I first went to Jacked I had my singlet, so that's what I wore and they never said anything about it. I figured that's what Eric does, so that's what I'll do. Literally every time we squat or deadlift, we wear singlets.

**Let's go from the back to the front, so to speak, and talk about the other kind of squats. There's a video of you front-squatting 765, and you weren't even wearing knee wraps. Then, a few weeks later, you front-squatted 800 and it looked even easier. You might be the strongest front-squatter in the world. What inspired this madness?** The highest front squat I'd ever seen was some Australian guy front-squatting 782 with wraps. When I front-squatted the 765, that was after I'd squatted

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573 and I hit 585 four days ago. I want to hit 600 at RUM. I have very strong shoulders. I used to do a lot of military pressing – I’ve done 455 for a double – and also incline pressing. My weak point is probably my pecs. Eric has showed me some stuff for benching that has helped. I don’t have much of an arch, I bench kind of like Brandon Lilly. As with the squat, I’ve found that the less assistance work I do for the bench, the stronger I’ve gotten. I’m fresher when I go to bench, and that has made a big difference.

**We’ve established that you’re insanely strong on both the squat and the bench, but why isn’t your deadlift higher?** At the last meet I did, I opened with 661, which was actually a PR [Personal Record] for me. My second attempt was 705 and I got that easy. My third attempt was 738 and I got that up, but I dropped it at the top. We’ve changed my technique since then; I’ve started rolling the bar, like

881 for four. I told myself before this RUM [Raw Unity] meet that I wanted to do an 800 front squat. Unfortunately, I tore my lat three weeks ago, so I couldn’t really deadlift. Normally I’d front squat after back squatting, but this time I front-squatted first. I’d heard about Malanichev front-squatting 800 but I’d never seen it. It was just something I wanted to do - something I wanted to cross off my list. For me, front squats feel more comfortable without wraps. They seem to throw off my technique. It may have moved well, but it was still heavy and it still kicked my ass!

**Have you always trained front squats? How often do you currently include them in your training?** With bodybuilding, I wanted big quads so I’d front squat and do lots of leg extensions. I just front-squatted a lot. It’s always felt more comfortable for me than regular squats. When I switched to bodybuilding, people told me I needed bigger hamstrings, so I started back-squatting a lot. I don’t front squat too much now, at least in meet prep, because I don’t want to over-train. But once or twice a month

I’ll front squat.

**You’re also a monster when it comes to the bench. There’s video of you hitting 555 for three, all paused. How do you explain this pressing power?** I’m better at reps than I am at singles, but I’m working on it. My best competition bench is



Benedikt Magnusson. Since making that change, I've hit 765 in the gym. I'm not built to deadlift and I don't know what I'm doing, but that seems to help me get the weight back on my heels. I recently tore my lat pretty bad - it was a Grade 2 tear. I'd be happy to hit 750 at RUM. I don't have short arms, but they're not long, and as a bigger guy I have trouble getting into a good position. I'd never deadlifted before I started powerlifting, so it's still pretty new to me.

**What about pulling sumo?** I've never tried it. Maybe I should. We'll see how RUM goes. I am improving. When I tore my lat I was attempting 775. I got down, got tight, started to pull and then we heard it tear. I pull better when I'm smaller, but I'm trying to squat 1,000 so I need to be big. It's a tug of war between the two lifts.

**What are your goals in the sport of powerlifting?** I'm doing RUM in two weeks and I'm hoping to break the squat record (Wilkerson's 1,000). My goals for that meet are to squat 1,003, bench 600 and total 2,300, or some combination of those. In the long run, I know that I need to improve my deadlift if I want to compete with Malanichev and his 900-lb. pull. But ultimately, squatting 1,000 is my main goal.

**(UPDATE) RUM has come and gone. How did you do?** My lat was still torn, so I knew there was no chance of 2300. My squats went OK. I got a small squat PR of 942 on my 2nd, but I missed my 3rd attempt with 1003. I got forward and I don't know what happened. I kinda regained myself and hit 600 on my 3rd bench. Of course, Malanichev squatted 1014, so he broke Wilkerson's record anyways. I just took a token deadlift. It was a good experience, but I was a little disappointed that I missed that last squat.

**What's next for you?** I still want to squat 1000 in a meet. I squatted 1005 in the gym last week, 4 weeks after RUM. Eric had pulled 900 two days earlier, so I was motivated by that and I thought I could do it. My next meet is Mark Bell's meet on June 1st. My immediate goal is to squat 1003. If I can take another attempt and try to break Malanichev's record, great. I want to PR on the bench, I want my deadlift to keep

going up, and I want to hit that 2300 total. I've got about 3 months, so I've got a little time to get it all figured out.

**Have you ever thought about going for the heaviest squat of all time without wraps? I believe it's 934 by Don Reinhoudt.** Yes, 2 weeks after RUM I squatted 865. I got it, but it was heavy. I think I could probably do around 900. That's something I might try for after I hit 1000 in wraps. I think I might be a better squatter without wraps, simply

because I haven't used wraps a whole lot. But 934 is a huge number, I think I'd have to practice for it. Plus, you've got to be careful that you don't blow your knees out.

**Is there anyone you'd like to thank?** Ed Coan, all three of the Lilliebridges and my fiancée, Jacqi. I want to thank Mark Bell for sponsoring me with Sling Shots and wraps, and for featuring me in Power. I've had a subscription for years and I always read it, so it's cool to be in it. **PM**

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# I'M BIG, I'M BAD AND I'M PRETTY

BY ROBERT OBERST

**M**ost of you reading this magazine already know who I am, but for the few of you who don't, pay attention.

The name is Robert Oberst. In two short years since I started this sport,

I have gotten my pro card, placed top-three at America's Strongest Man twice, made the finals at World's Strongest Man, competed on the Arnold stage, signed with GAT Nutrition and still hold the record for the

heaviest log press in American history. It might seem like it was easy for me to get where I am, but nothing could be further from the truth. I spent years in the weight room laying down the groundwork for the athlete I am today

Robert pressing CrossFit athlete Katie Hogan in the Sling Shot booth at the 2014 Arnold Fitness Expo.





— and when I started lifting, I still sucked.

I signed up to compete six weeks after that first day. I still remember talking to the man promoting the show (now a very close friend), and he told me, “You’ll never be ready,” because it was such a heavy show. So, I told him it was too light and he should up some of the weights. Long story short, I zeroed two events and got my butt kicked.

That didn’t shake me for a second.

I knew then what I still knew today: Give me some time and nobody can stop me. Nobody! I could barely deadlift 500 lbs. and I weighed 370. So I worked my butt off to improve. When my friends were partying or hanging out at the beach, I was in the gym. I took my lumps, too.

My second show was in Colorado, where I did a car deadlift for the first time. Needless to say, I wasn’t too good at it. I gritted my teeth and put all I had into it, and on my second rep I felt a pop in my low back and my legs went numb. It hurt so bad, I fell forward landing in the judges’ arms. I still refused to quit. I did three more events and finished in second place, earning me an invitation to Nationals.

I got home and immediately started preparing; I only had five weeks. My back was so bad that I had to sleep sitting up in my truck the whole five weeks, but I still kept pushing. That may sound stupid, pushing so hard with that type of injury, and maybe it was, but you won’t find anyone who’s done anything worth remembering

without collecting a few scars along the way. So, I got to Nationals and earned top-10 in the country in my third show ever.

I competed a month and a half after getting my pro card in the biggest show on the American circuit and knew I’d place top-three. People looked at me like I was crazy, cocky and stupid all rolled up into one. Well, guess what? I did what I said I would and haven’t lowered my expectations of myself one bit since. I work too hard to pretend I don’t believe in myself just to spare someone else’s feelings. I am one of the strongest men on the planet and I earned it. If anyone doesn’t like me saying it, then come beat me.

At World’s Strongest Man last year I spent a lot of time talking with my late friend Mike Jenkins (RIP, brother) about it, and he told me people had felt the same way about him. We both understood that, coming from highly successful careers in football, we’d developed the attitude and mentality of a champion. I don’t care if I’m lifting weights or playing checkers, I want to win. If you don’t feel that way, you won’t succeed. You have to hate losing just as much, if not more, than you like winning.

A championship mentality is confidence; it’s a belief in yourself that is unbreakable. Even on those days where you have a terrible performance and nobody thinks you have what it takes, that doesn’t shake the truth that you know inside — and that truth is that you have it in you to be great. This mentality is earned. They

aren’t handing it out with participation trophies in childrens’ soccer. You have to be willing to go to that dark place inside, that place that sometimes makes you look like “the crazy guy” that screams at himself in a crowded gym while everyone else is just there to socialize and hit on girls. What others think means nothing until it’s all said and done, and your body of work forces no other conclusion than that you were exceptional.

I grew up with 10 siblings in a small house, and the only thing we consistently had was competition. We lived for two years only having electricity on the weekends when my dad would sneak a little generator home from work. I know what it feels like to grow up around other kids who had everything, and to be looked at like you’re less than human because your clothes aren’t nice or you couldn’t afford to go on field trips.

I also know what it’s like to finally feel like you have a chance, and then be cut from the NFL. I had to look my mother in the eye and tell her I couldn’t buy her the house I promised. The day will come when I make good on that promise, and nobody can stop me.

When I started Strongman I decided, I will not fail and I will not bow. It was either become an animal and take what I deserve, or fold over. I made my choice. So excuse me for being “harsh” or whatever negative description you would like to attach to my name, but there’s no soft path to greatness. You can either join me or get the hell out of the way, either way I’m coming.

As strong as I started, it is nothing compared to what I will become. We all have our stories and this is just a small part of mine. When I’m gone and my family is still talking about what I’ve done then you can decide if I did it “the right way.” But me? I’m going to do it my way. Is your story going to be worth telling? When you look back, there is no pain, no fatigue and no excuses. There are winners and there are losers, and nothing anyone does will erase that.

Like I said, I’m Robert Oberst — and with my strength and this glorious beard, you better get used to seeing me around. A lot. **PM**



# A Need for Speed

BY CHRIS DUFFIN

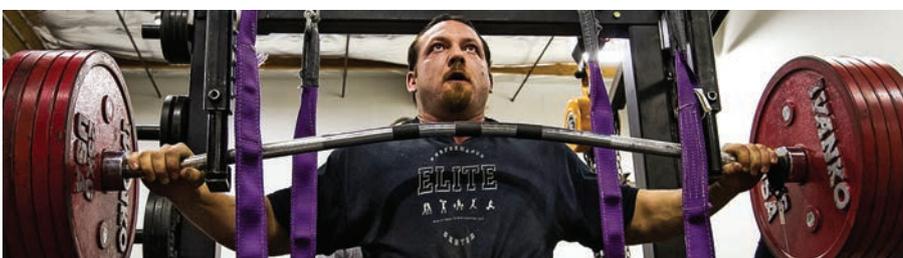


A few years back I switched from multi-ply to raw lifting. While I love multi-ply lifting, gear had run its course for me. Even though I made it to the top 10 all-time in two weight classes, I felt I had left a lot on the table and never accomplished what I had hoped. It was time to move on.

My transition to raw lifting went well, and after three months of training I did my first meet, totaling 1,946 at 220. From that point I continued to make gains rapidly for the next nine months. Overall I had found that my training

in multiply gear had not hindered my ability to compete raw.

I made no serious changes, for the most part, to my training methodology when I made the switch. I continued to work up to heavy one- to three-rep range on a core lift (or variation), often to the point of failure. Constantly pushing that failure point was also to the delight of my spotters, I might add. I would change these core lifts frequently or cycle them in different ways, similar to Westside training methods. The only exception was that I had eliminated the



to grind out all my reps. After a year of doing this, my progress stalled.

In the past I found that doing traditional light speed work had not translated to being fast under heavy loads. So I wasn't about to go back to that methodology. What I wanted to see was improved speed with closer to maximal loads in training.

I purchased a tool to help me with this program by measuring my bar speed, called a GymAware. It's very similar to a Tendo unit, and is an accelerometer that sits on the floor and attaches to the bar via a string. Unlike the Tendo unit, it captures the angle vector and also links to either an iPhone or iPad, where you can enter the weight, lifter and exercise to compile more information or link to an online database. It can chart any variety of speed, power, acceleration or force curves, as well as output bar travel and time under tension. I have an additional package that compiles data on every rep of every workout for every lifter in my gym into a database. I can run reports for a lifter or view videos, if they were captured. After reviewing all this data, I decided to focus on one simple metric to establish some parameters around. This metric is mean velocity.

While I use this tool, it isn't a requirement to follow the methods I'm going to outline. It can be done with video feedback, training partner feedback and being diligent and honest with yourself in assessing the bar speed.

I usually kick off a training cycle with a big volume training session for the squat and the bench press. This is a big, high-rep workout that has two effects. The high volume overload sends the body into a bit of distress and the recovery response from that will be needed in following weeks. In addition high rep work like that is also done pretty fast and gets you heading in the right direction for the cycle in regards to speed. I've actually been doing this fairly frequently for the bench press, about every four or five weeks. Because squatting or pulling for 20-plus reps is just no damn fun, the frequency of that may be two or three times, at best, of high-rep bench. I will reference a recent 505x20 squat video

normally prescribed approach to speed work years prior, and had replaced it with volume/repetition work.

About a year into training raw, I hit a wall and quit making progress. In evaluating my lifting, I found that my bar speed had dramatically reduced. This also made me realize why my transition from geared to raw had gone so well. When using gear, nearly all

lifts are very explosive – even when training at near maximal loads in the one- to three-rep range. In effect, I was doing heavy speed work when training in gear, and I had been able to take advantage of this when I switched to raw. But then after continuing to train in the same fashion at or near failure, but not training explosively due to the lack of gear, I began

# 1076.9 Pound Bench. Any Questions?



Tiny Meeker

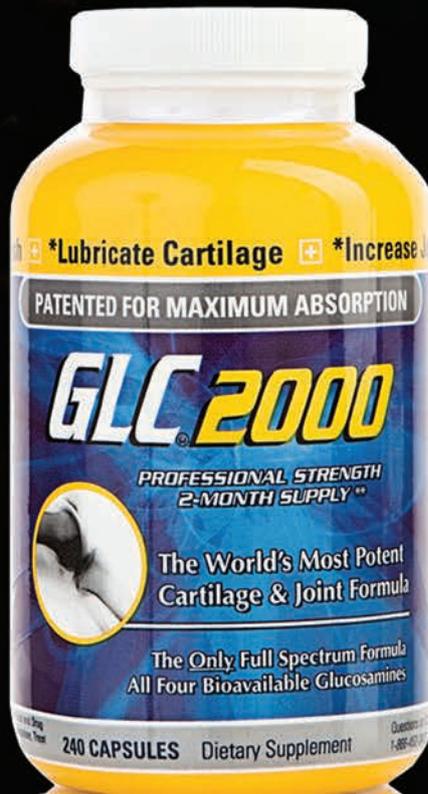
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heavy as a weight as I can while still maintaining a speed of three. If I can hit a few sets with that, I will — but as soon as my first rep drops the least bit in speed, it's time to move on. I typically stick with doubles, as I find the speed drop off on the third rep is significant.

The second and third week I try and add sets while maintaining speed or even getting faster, while maintaining the same weight. Then I spend a few weeks trying to increase the weight while trying to achieve the same speed I did in prior weeks. It will look something like the following, with the speed being displayed in parenthesis behind the reps:

- Week 1** – 505 x 20 (4)
- Week 2** – 650 x 2 (3), 2 (2.5)
- Week 3** – 650 x 2 (3), 2 (3), 2 (3), 2 (2.5)
- Week 3** – 650 x 2 (3.5), 2 (3.5), 2 (3), 2 (2.5)
- Week 4** – 660 x 2 (3), 2 (3), 2 (3)
- Week 5** – 670 x 2 (3), 2 (3), 2 (2.5)
- Week 6** – 670 x 2 (3), 2 (3), 2 (3)
- Week 7 (test)** – 780 x 2 (2)

In the example above, notice that in Week 5 I bumped the weight but didn't maintain the speed over the workout, so I kept the same weight in Week 6 until I was successful at doing so. Currently I'm doing a lot of work with the safety squat bar, but I still change up things frequently between changing bars by adding chains or a box, or changing (or dropping) knee wraps as I repeat these cycles.

I also do other movements in the workouts. I usually start each workout with a sequence of movements to warm-up/cue the movement patterns for the day that last about 15 minutes. Then I move to the core lift. After the core lift I keep myself to a maximum of three additional movements to minimize scope creep. If you're doing seven or eight different exercises, there is a good chance you don't really know what to focus on, or you're allowing yourself to spread and dilute your efforts on unneeded movements. Limit the exercises to force yourself to choose what's important.

Using these methods, I have blasted through my stalling point and recently hit an 805 x 3 squat on test week, and have regularly been going above 800 lbs. on deadlifts for reps. **PM**

on my YouTube channel.

All of the following information relates to the squat and deadlift, as I don't want to overstep any bounds on the sharing any training advice on bench press that I have received from all-time record holder Adrian Larsen.

If we break out bar speed into the following categories, it will make more sense going forward. I've also provided some baseline mean velocity targets for those with measurement devices. The caveat is that these change slightly with each lift, or even within the lift, such as between sumo and conventional pulls.

**5** – Explosive, like you're doing

pure speed work in the 50- to 60-percent max-rep range (.50+m/s).

**4** – Almost as fast as pure speed work, but weight is having a bit of impact (.39+m/s).

**3** – Like an opening attempt that you "smoke." Solid, clean, fast, but heavy lift (.29+m/s).

**2** – You're starting to grind, but there isn't any doubt you would make the lift (.19+m/s).

**1** – Definite grinder, and it's hit or miss on if you will finish the lift (under .18m/s).

Now that we have that established, we can move on to a training plan. After the first week I work up to as

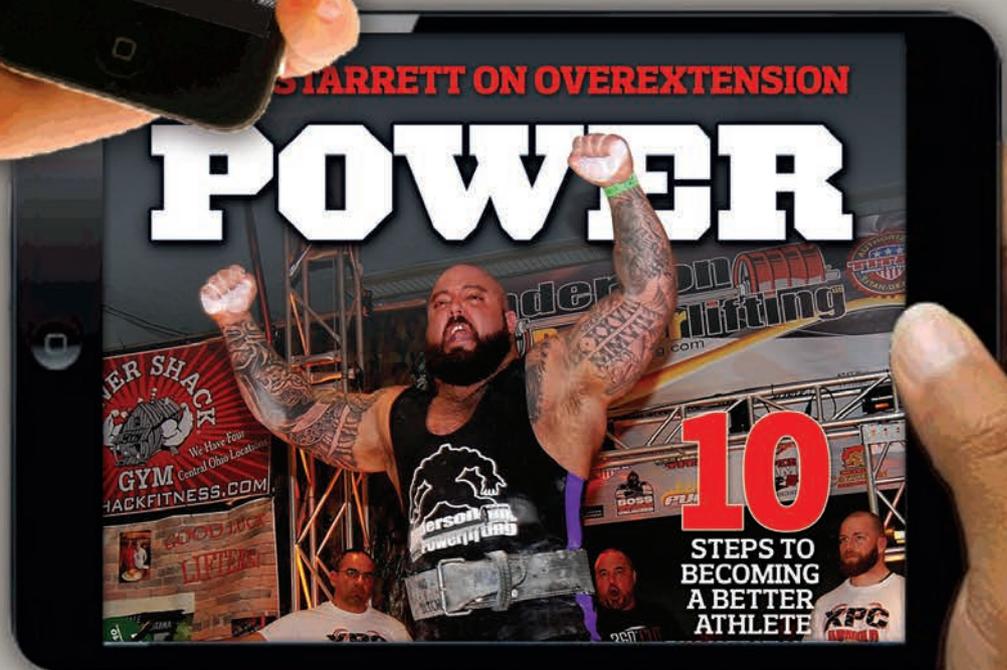
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# Big Benching Takes Time

BY ADRIAN LARSEN



Everyone wants to bench more. Everyone. If they say they don't, they are lying. Benching has become the big staple in lifting. No one asks, "Hey bro, what is your knee extension?" They ask what you can bench. No matter if you're benching 200 or 700 lbs., everyone wants to

bench more.

From when I first started lifting to now, the goal is to put myself in the best position possible to bench more. If you asked me 10 years ago if I thought I could be the strongest raw bencher at 220 lbs., I would have told you probably not. Why? I don't have high-tech

equipment. I don't own thousands of dollars in bands, chains, boards, foam rollers or whatever else is needed. I go to a regular gym and lift with regular people just trying to get stronger. To top it off, if you haven't noticed, I do not get a ton of leg drive. Okay, that was a lie. I don't get any leg drive.

How is it possible to increase your bench or maybe break an all-time record? How is it possible to make decent jumps every year? How possible is it to reach a goal? Whether it is to bench 225 lbs. 10 times or to bench 405 lbs. for five reps. Following some very simple steps will help increase your bench no matter what level you're on.

I see this often when a person tries to make leaps and bounds on the bench in a short period of time. It has taken me years to get to where I am. Usually people think that working harder in the gym translates into bigger numbers. Not always. It is great to have a strong work ethic. In fact, something that drives me in the gym is to think of someone that could possibly be out-working me. That makes me train harder and stay focused, but that doesn't mean I overdo it.

Think about this: training hard with high intensity during every training session does equal gains, but that isn't all that it takes. You also have to put thought into your training. Ask yourself, Why I am doing certain things? Am I getting the most out of my training?

Follow the Alpha Project. Here is a break down of a common four-week outline of the Alpha Project.

### **Week 1**

Front-load your training. Get in some good accessory work prior to benching. For instance, I will super-set some lat pulls with a rear delt exercise. I will also incorporate some band movements, like face pulls, along with some curls. This is a good way to warm up.

Bench press. Work up to benching three sets of two, without ever failing. This puts a little thought into your workout. Not failing at a lift takes time to judge and makes you leave your ego outside.

Dead-pin presses from the chest. Focus on firing that bar off your chest as fast as you can. Shirted benchers need to work on lockout work with boards, but raw benchers need to work on the opposite side of things. We need to work on firing the bar off our chest and create as much speed as possible to carry us to lockout.



Shoulder and triceps work. I try to stick around five sets of eight reps for both. I will hit shoulder raises along with a variety of triceps work that includes push downs, dips and incorporate dumbbells.

### **Week 2**

Front-load your training.

Bench press. This week's benching is much different. It is designed to fix the trouble areas in form. When benching, your working sets should not be over 75 percent with a pyramid set of three reps, two reps and single

rep. Using a light weight will help you make adjustments in your form.

Push-ups, pull-ups and flies. Three or four sets of eight to 10 reps. Think of this workout as taking it easy to prepare for the next heavy week.

Once you get to week three, repeat week one. Flip flop these two weeks and you will see a dramatic change in your benching. This means you will only go heavy 26 times a year. Take every single workout seriously! Put in the effort and train as hard as possible — 26 times in one year isn't a lot. There isn't room for texting and play-



Adrian and Mark Bell having fun at the Sling Shot booth at the 2014 Arnold Fitness Expo

ing grab-ass. Part of understanding 26 weeks of heavy benching is making a sacrifice that you will be in there week in and week out trying to better yourself. That means taking care of your body days in advance with hydration, supplements and plenty of sleep.

Examine your weak areas on benching and make them your strong areas, but do this without neglecting your strong areas. Remember they are your strong areas for a reason. Continue to train them hard and do not neglect them. Train smart by evaluating movements and what you are expecting to get from doing those movements. Don't be the sheep and follow around someone and do something just because they do it. Understand why you are doing things and have an expectation of what you are getting from what you're doing. Expecting results is important.

Ask questions. I often get asked,

"How do stop the bar from stalling off my chest?" Once that question is answered, the very next question should be why. Why would I do that? How does that fix the problem? Understand what you're doing and why you're doing it. Do not just settle with an answer not fully understanding the concept.

Remember that doing a lot of volume is as hard on your body as doing heavy singles. You're not doing your body a favor by thinking you're taking it easy one week and doing high repetition work. Benching high reps takes a toll on your body and can take as long to recover from high rep work as heavy benching can. It is fun to gauge your training and the hard work you have put in by doing some volume work or testing your eight or ten rep max. However, keep in mind on how your body reacts to that, along with your

expectation of what it is doing for you. Doing high repetition work doesn't get your body used to handling heavy weight and it doesn't make your one rep stronger.

There is no rep calculator out there that can judge where you should be. Your training dictates that. The one rep calculator is you on the platform. That is the only calculator that matters.

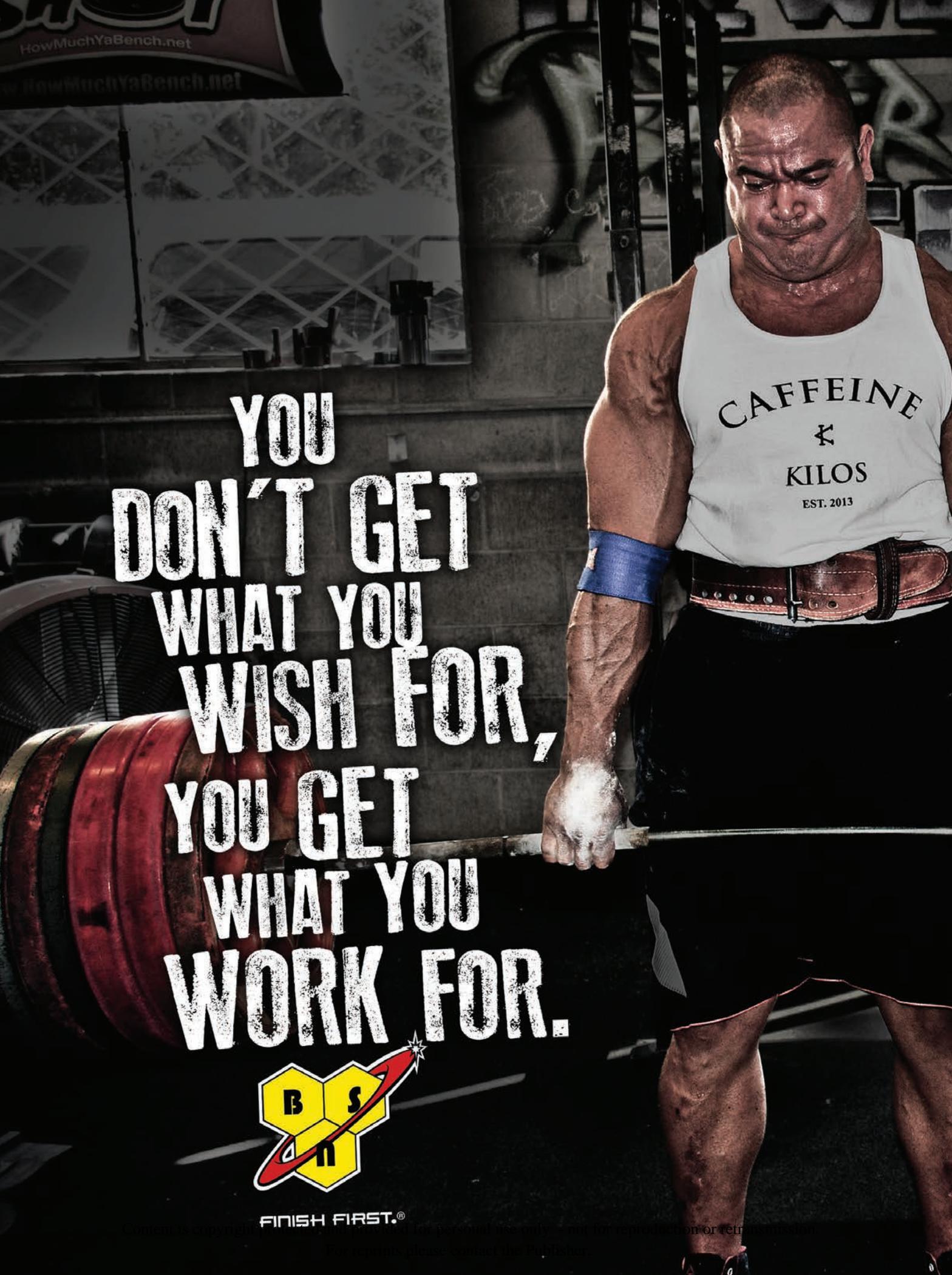
Lastly, it took me an entire year to increase my raw one rep bench from 545 to 585 lbs. I am happy with a 40 lbs. progress per year. Though, that will not be the case every year. I set myself up for the best chance of that by hard work and following the few things listed above. You can simply follow any program out there and have success, but you must be consistent and give what you expect out of the gym. Be an alpha; don't be a sheep. **PM**

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# Chatting with **BRIAN SHAW** THE WORLD'S STRONGEST MAN

BY MATT VINCENT

PHOTOS BY MHP

I was fortunate enough to get a chance to chat with Brian Shaw, truly a massive guy, at this year's Arnold Classic. This interview was done over the course of a month prior to the Arnold Classic, where he finished second.

This contest is one of, if not the heaviest contest that has ever been held. A 440-lb. log for reps; 1,500-lb. yoke; 880-lb. Tiber frame carry; Hummer deadlift with 1,155 lbs. winning it; and a 274lbs circus dumbbell. Apparently, training to be a repeat winner of the World's Strongest Man (WSM) title takes a lot of time, and puts Brian at the other end of the clock from most of us. The majority of his responses came to my questions after midnight, post-training. Being 6-foot-8 and 415 lbs. it takes a ton of time to work, and some serious dedication.

**POWER:** I guess my first question and start to all of this is asking how do you feel about heading into the Arnold this year? What events are you looking forward to and what have you been working on improving since WSM? Congrats on winning by the way.

**BRIAN SHAW:** I feel really good heading into the Arnold. Last year I was dealing with a bad nerve injury in my left arm that was causing me to lose function of my left hand. It was a bad problem that almost made me pull out. It severely affected my training leading up to the Arnold last year, and I was not ready to compete. I had a nerve release surgery; since then I have improved a lot and things are getting better all the time. Those same injuries have not messed up my prep for the Arnold this year, so I will be a lot stronger.

As far as improvements I have made since WSM, there aren't a lot. I just shifted gears and set up my training so I would be ready for the Arnold. I have been putting a lot of work into my log press, so hopefully I can perform well at the Arnold with that.

**Power:** Injuries come with the territory of being a top strength athlete. What do you do to help with prevention or rehab? What's been the best for keeping you healthy?

**SHAW:** I was at a point with the nerve problems that I thought my Strongman career was over. I couldn't use my hand to get dressed, I couldn't tie my shoes, I didn't even have the strength to twist a door handle open or cut my fingernails with clippers. It was beyond scary, and that makes me appreciate my comeback so much more. I have put in more work coming back from the nerve problems than most people would ever realize.

There was one guy who worked with me through all of that and never gave up on me. His name is Justin Willis and he owns Teamwork Therapy and Sports Performance in Colorado. He worked through that injury with me even when every other medical person I saw told me that I either needed to stop training or accept that I would never get back to where I was. He is really a great guy and the best therapist I could ask for. He fixes everything I have wrong and has improved my performance. We use a combination of stretching and soft tissue work to fix me up and keep me healthy.

**Power:** Overcoming injuries to becoming WSM comes with some unique life experiences. What have been your favorite things about getting to travel the world and compete in something you love?

**SHAW:** Sometimes people assume that the guys at the top never have big struggles or challenges to overcome, and that is just not the truth. In most cases the guys who are at the top just refused to quit, and kept working toward their goal no matter what was in their way.

It has been great getting to travel to compete in Strongman. The only drawback is sitting on an airplane (most of the time in a tiny seat) for long



hours. I have been very thankful to have the opportunity to see the world and experience different countries and different cultures. It makes me feel very fortunate to be able to live here in the USA and to have all the things that I do. If people only knew how bad some people in other parts of the world have it, they wouldn't take so many things for granted.

**Power:** You're referring to flying coach, but all seats are probably tiny for you. What would be your No. 1 luxury you wish you could afford?

**SHAW:** I think a private jet would be my No. 1 thing to buy if I ever had a lot of money to waste. The new breed of Strongman is certainly pushing the sport to new levels. I love being able to raise the bar, and I will continue to do that as long as I possibly can.

**Power:** What has been your favorite place to visit, and is there any place outside of Colorado that has made you think of moving?

**SHAW:** I have to say Hawaii is

my favorite place. It was so awesome there, and sitting on the beach there was amazing. As far as moving, though, I don't think I will ever leave Colorado. We get 300 days of sun and clear skies. The mountains are awesome and there is no humidity. Not many places in the world can beat Colorado, in my opinion.

**Power:** How important is the Arnold to you?

**SHAW:** Winning the Arnold is the only thing I am focused on. It is very important to me to win that contest. In 2012 I had to do the whole contest with a torn bicep that I suffered on the first event and took fourth. Last year, after not being able to prep the way I needed to, I lost on the last event and got second place. I'm not making any excuses, but the last two years just haven't worked out. I just need to come back to this contest healthy to really show what I can do and win my second Arnold title.

**Power:** What has it been like get-

ting to compete against and triumph over some of the best of all time, like Big Z or Misha? Who is your favorite, and who do you think is the strongest man of all time?

**SHAW:** It has really been an honor to compete alongside the strongest men in the world now for a number of years. Being able to beat all of the top guys has been great as well — and as a competitor, what I always strive for is winning every contest I enter. I am a super competitive guy and I don't like to lose.

As far as the strongest man of all time, it is hard to answer that question. In my mind there are several men who have dominated in their respective era. When it comes to Strongman, the list in my eyes is Kaz, Jon Pall, Magnus Ver, Pudz, Zydrunas — and I hope to add my name to that list in the future. One of my goals is to at least be in the argument as one of the strongest men to ever live when I am done with my career. That would be amazing.

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**Power:** You train at your own place. What are the basics of the program you run? How often are you doing events?

**SHAW:** I have put more money, time and effort into having my own equipment and facility than most people could ever imagine. I decided a long time ago that I was going to do everything necessary to be the best I possibly could be, and that meant that I needed to have my own private gym. The level of awesome that happens at my gym is something few people will ever experience, and my training partners are second to none.

I change my training depending on what contest I am getting ready for and what events I will have. Because I have access to any event, I need to train at any time I can work on specific events any day of the week, and throw them in where they fit. I still build my program off overhead press, squats and deadlifts as the main movements.

**Power:** In a former life you played basketball at the collegiate level. Where did you play. Do you still play



at all?

**SHAW:** Basketball was my first love. I was able to play in college and get my school completely paid for, which was awesome. I played for two years at Otero JC in Colorado and then two years at Black Hills State University in South Dakota. Basketball gave me a great

athletic base going into Strongman.

I have not played at all since I finished college. I was ready to be done at that point because my new love had become lifting weights. I might get back into playing after I retire, but I don't miss it at all.

**Power:** What is your absolute favorite thing to eat?

**SHAW:** I do have to consume a lot of food to fuel my body! I eat six or seven times per day and consume roughly 4 to 5 lbs. of meat. I definitely enjoy food, but I really enjoy eating good food. Nothing is better than a pound of grass fed beef with potatoes and veggies. I will admit that a cheat meal is good every once in a while as well. I will normally go with pizza for my cheat meals.

**Power:** Other than winning WSM, what's your favorite memory or experience within training or competing? Also, what's the worst travel experience you have had?

**SHAW:** There are so many great memories I have from the time I have spent traveling and competing all over

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the world. One of the most memorable was actually one of my very first international contests, which was the World's Strongest Nation competition in the Ukraine. It was a team competition so, Derek Poundstone, Travis Ortmyer, Tom McClure and I represented Team USA. We all got the worst food poisoning on the trip and could not get rid of it. We still managed to get second place overall, and probably should have won. I actually came back 25 to 30 lbs. lighter than when I left, but looking back, there are some very funny stories about rushing to find a toilet, running out of toilet paper, etc. The trip was full of memories I will never forget.

**Power:** Now for some reader questions. Stephen Davis wants to know if you worry about your health. With the passing of Mike Jenkins and other large fitness athletes, is it something you talk with your doctor about?

**SHAW:** I have always tried to be as proactive as I can when it comes to my health and taking care of my body. It

is important to go to the doctor to get regular health screenings, as you can never be too careful.

**Power:** Jim Bono wants to know your opinion about why, after years of dominance by the Europeans, American Strongmen have come back. It seems we're fielding a bigger group of folks each year at WSM finals, and others, than in the past.

**SHAW:** I don't know if I have a great answer to this. I know that the sport has grown a lot here in the U.S. in the last 10 to 15 years due to the fact that there are a lot of amateur contests with lighter weights to enter. The more popular Strongman becomes only gets more guys who are willing to compete. We have had some very special American athletes in the last 10 years that have certainly been competitive at WSM, and hopefully that continues.

**Power:** Ryan Imbach asks what your favorite piece of equipment is in your gym. Do you make your own equipment, have it made locally or buy it from someone like BiggDogg?

**SHAW:** I don't really have just one

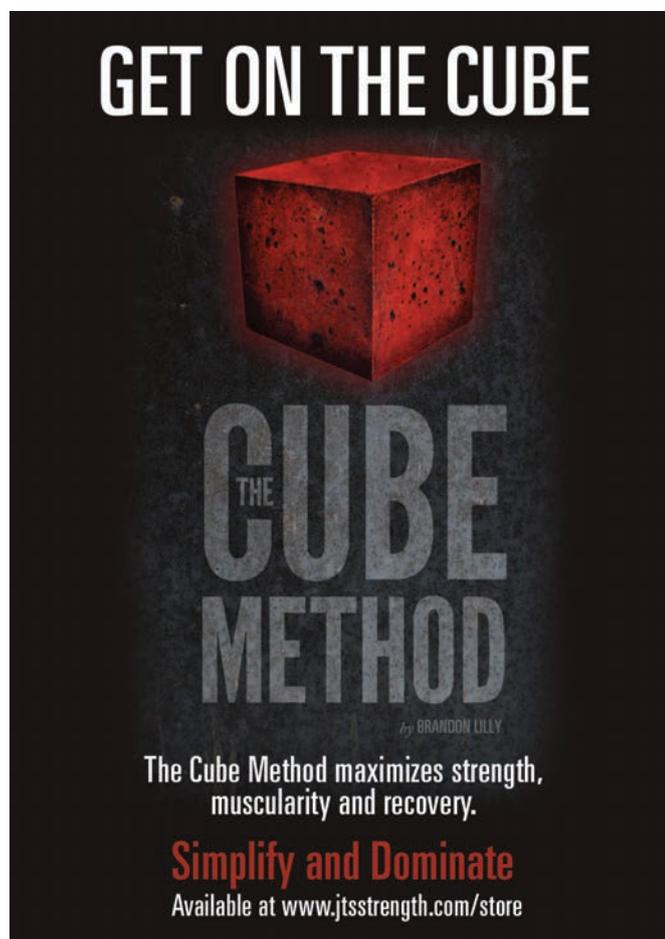
favorite piece of equipment in my gym. Everything I have in there I have had to work to get, so it all means a lot to me. Most of my equipment is made from a local steel fabrication company called Redd Iron. I trained the owner of the company for a couple of years and built a relationship with everyone there. They have helped me out tremendously.

**Power:** Thanks for chatting with us Brian and good luck at this year's WSM!

**SHAW:** Thank you Matt. **PM**

*(Editor's update: The 2014 World's Strongest Man was held a few weeks ago in Los Angeles, CA. Zydrunas Savickas was crowned champion, Brian Shaw took 3rd and Mike Burke took 4th.)*

Matt Vincent is an all-around strength athlete competing in Strongman; powerlifting, both raw and geared; track and field; weightlifting; and the Highland Games. He travels the world competing with top athletes. He won the title of World Champion in the 2012 Highland Games. Vincent spends his spare time traveling and writing about things he's passionate about. Learn more at [Mattvincent.net](http://Mattvincent.net).



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# TIME TO QUIT?

BY ROBERT L. WANAMAKER

I don't have many illusions these days.

I'm a fat, old cripple. I'll turn 50-something this year. I discovered Strongman — the actual sport, as opposed to watching television — when I was 46 or 47. Not that long ago. I'm a baby in this sport.

In 2005, my body was to the point where I really couldn't walk much. Not from sports, but from disease and defect. Now, it seems like every year I go through another round of doctors who tell me, "You can't lift free weights." They all look at me and shake their head when I say, "OK, I'll just keep training Atlas stones and kegs and logs and axles and yokes and farmer walks."

I go looking for new doctors. The MDs all tell me the same thing, all shake their heads. They might give me an Rx for painkillers. They tell me chiropractic care is useless.

Chances are, I'll never get things together to the point where I can compete — and I mean compete — in the Open division, let alone land a shot at a pro card. Heck, after competing in three contests in 2010 as a master, I was wiped out. That's been my best year on the books.

In 2012, things started tearing again. I'm hoping I can sneak up on a full-bore training cycle in 2014. You know, demand a little more of myself. Of this messed-up body housing a not-quite-yet broken spirit.

Maybe I'll die in the driveway after doing a yoke-tire medley. Maybe I'll die on the bike this summer; I really want to ride again. Maybe I'll die in

my sleep, 20 years from now.

The single biggest regret I have in my life is this: Nearly every day I wonder, How good could I have been if I had discovered this sport when I was in my 20s or even my 30s? What if I had put in the time that I spent elsewhere, to training, competing, getting stronger?

I woke up at age 45 with a mangled body anyhow. There aren't any guarantees.

A buddy of mine was driving his beautiful girls to soccer practice a few years ago; he hit a deer at freeway speed, the minivan rolled. Everybody was buckled up; seatbelts held, airbags deployed. The girls walked away, thank God, without a scratch.

His spinal cord severed in the cervical region — he broke his neck turning around to check on his babies — and now he races marathons in a wheelchair. He can kick my ass in a marathon. I can carry his ass up the stairs to my house so we can sit around and drink, tell stories.

Strike that. There is one guarantee: Someday, you'll have to quit. It won't be your choice.

Should he quit chair racing? His wife opposed him getting into chair racing. It's dangerous. They already came so close to losing him. All he knows, for certain, is that he has to be chasing something. If he's not chasing, he's dying. The sad reality is that he's limited by his circumstances in what he can chase.

You can't focus on that sad reality. And yes, it's reality. But so is the fact that he's setting PRs, traveling to new



race venues, meeting new people, pushing his limits to the best of his ability.

Never stop pursuing. Don't give up the chase. Stay hungry.

Is it Strongman that motivates you? Is it powerlifting? Is that what you love? There's no reason to stop because of aches, because of pains. You're going to have those no matter what — just look at the statistics, watch the news.

There's a whole culture of pain med junkies, tied to the couch and the television. They've never tried Strong-



man. They think 200 lbs. is immovable. They've never been to a gym. They've never pursued, they've only medicated.

Another buddy of mine was a powerlifter most of his life. At age 60, he decided it was time for something more dynamic, something different. He picked up Strongman. Butch is flirting with his mid-60s, and he's still setting PRs. Last summer, fresh off back surgery, he competed at a regional show. His grandkids were there, cheering him on. How can it get better than that?

I wasn't able to compete, but I was there taking pictures, catching up with friends. After the comp, Butch caught up with me, and said, "Bob, we have to get you back out and competing, man."

Butch is right. I don't ever want to quit. I'm all too aware that someday I will have to quit, that choice will be removed from whatever epistemic process goes into the decision, and I will be sidelined. Setbacks abound, if you look for them. But for every setback, there's an opportunity.

Maybe I won't set any PRs in the

upcoming year. Maybe I won't be able to compete. I don't know — those questions are all open. Maybe I'll turn things around. Maybe with all the therapy, all the work, all the thought, I'll finally turn things around in a big way and set PRs, and be pain free, and do even better in comps than I thought. Maybe I'll compete in Open division, and maybe I'll make Nationals. **PM**

*Bob Wanamaker can be reached via email at [bob@wanamaker.org](mailto:bob@wanamaker.org), his website at <http://www.thethinkingstrongman.com>, on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/thethinkingstrongman>.*

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2	Joshua Smith	SPF	10/26/13	800
3	John Lyras	RPS	10/6/13	780
4	Tee Cummings	SPF	3/8/14	775
5	Casey Williams	RUPC	2/9/14	755
6	Greg Nuckols	IPA	5/18/13	750
7	Greg Panora	APF	5/18/13	749
7	Tony Chirico	UPA	2/15/14	749
9	Jason Colley	UPA	4/20/13	744
10	David McLeod	RPS	6/8/13	740
11	Max Aita	SPF	11/2/13	738
12	Kevin Oak	RPS	11/16/13	725
12	Chris Despain	RPS	1/18/14	725
14	Steve Goggins	RUPC	2/9/14	722
15	Matt Disbrow	XPC	10/6/13	715
16	Ernie Lilliebridge Jr	UPA	4/20/13	710
17	Mark Ferris	IPA	4/6/13	705
17	Mindis Jurenas	SPF	9/28/13	705
17	Matt Claussen	UPA	11/16/13	705
17	Robert DelaRosa	USPA	1/25/14	705
21	Brett Wondra	USPA	10/5/13	694
21	Sean Page	USPA	12/7/13	694
23	Ron Walling	SPF	10/26/13	690
24	Jared Dale	USPA	10/5/13	688
25	MICHAEL MCDONALD	APA	11/9/13	683
25	Tyson Meyers	NASA	2/15/14	683
27	Bobby Fields	IPA	3/23/13	675
28	Lance Hickey	RUPC	2/9/14	672
29	Pete Rubish	UPA	11/16/13	666
29	Michael Armendariz	IPL	11/9/13	666
29	Michael Wiseck	UPA	10/12/13	666
29	Brandon Bruce	USPA	1/25/14	666
33	Lucas Kailling	UPA	2/15/14	661
34	Allen Underwood	IPA	4/6/13	660
34	Matt Quinn	SPF	8/31/13	660
36	Trace Walls	USPA	10/5/13	655
36	Phillip Mardis	USPA	1/25/14	655
38	Dominic Constantino	IPA	3/23/13	650
38	Andy Huang	APA	4/20/13	650
38	DAVE SMILEY	IPA	6/22/13	650
38	JOSHUA CLEVELAND	WPA	7/27/13	650
38	Jared Skimmer	USPA	8/25/13	650
38	Ed Zende	RPS	10/6/13	650
38	Cody Kloppel	SPF	10/12/13	650
38	Ryan Conley	APF	10/5/13	650
38	Curran Delaney	UPA	2/15/14	650
38	Jeff Irion	SPF	3/23/14	650
48	Jefferson Calloway	SPF	10/26/13	640
49	Jesse Griffin	USPA	8/17/13	639
50	Ron Nichols	UPA	4/20/13	633
50	Maclain Ruuska	UPA	4/21/13	633
50	John Isemann	NASA	1/18/14	633

## BENCH PRESS

RANK	ATHLETE	FEDERATION	DATE	LBS.
1	Gary Larson	USPA	7/13/13	562
2	Mark Bell	SPF	11/2/13	545
3	Brandon Smith	APF	10/5/13	540
4	Matt Phelps	USPA	4/13/13	530
5	Casey Williams	RUPC	2/9/14	529
6	Dan Green	ProRaw	11/17/13	523
7	David McLeod	RPS	6/8/13	520
7	Chris Carson	RPS	8/24/13	520
9	Matthew Rosensweet	USAPL	3/23/13	518
9	Kade Weber	RUPC	2/8/14	518
9	Rosensweet, Matthew	USAPL	3/23/13	518
12	Matt Disbrow	XPC	10/6/13	515
13	Anthony Luna	UPA	7/20/13	512
14	TONY LOTMAN	IPA	11/16/13	510
15	James Phraner	USPA	7/13/13	507
16	Anthony Vidal	RPS	11/16/13	505
17	Greg Panora	APF	5/18/13	501
17	Paul Bossi	RAW	10/5/13	501
17	John Bieg	USPA	1/25/14	501
20	John Lyras	RPS	10/6/13	500
20	Joshua Smith	SPF	10/26/13	500
20	Bob Zappolo	RPS	3/8/14	500
23	Johnny Millhouse	USAPL	8/17/13	496
24	Andrew Connors	APF	4/28/13	490
24	Sean Page	USPA	12/7/13	490
24	Rich Coppede	USPA	11/9/13	490
27	Ron Nichols	UPA	4/20/13	485
28	Joshua Osucha	RPS	4/20/13	480
28	Kansas Wegener	RPS	6/1/13	480
30	Cory Dexter	USPA	7/13/13	479
30	Jesse Drach	USPA	8/3/13	479
32	Ron Walling	SPF	10/26/13	475
32	Kevin Oak	RPS	11/16/13	475
34	Iman Richards	USPA	6/29/13	473
34	Michael Silbernagel	APF	7/27/13	473
34	Michael Zundelevich	RUPC	2/9/14	473
37	David Jasiulewicz	RPS	9/15/13	470
37	Adam Downing	UPA	11/2/13	470
39	Bobby Faber	WPC	7/20/13	468
40	Seven Szathmary	RPS	10/13/13	465
41	Jordan Wong	RUPC	2/8/14	462
41	Phillip Mardis	USPA	6/29/13	462
41	Ryan Osborne	USPA	5/18/13	462
41	Mike McHargh	USAPL	8/17/13	462
41	Michael Renfroe	APA	11/9/13	462
41	MICHAEL MCDONALD	APA	11/9/13	462
41	Nick Angelini	USAPL	1/19/14	462
41	Tyson Meyers	NASA	2/15/14	462
49	Kyle Comes	SPF	6/8/13	460
49	Kyle Lombardo	SPF	3/8/14	460

# Top 50 Rankings, RAW

## DEADLIFT

RANK	ATHLETE	FEDERATION	DATE	LBS.
1	Orlando Green	USPA	12/14/13	843
2	Dan Green	ProRaw	11/17/13	837
3	David Troutt	IPL	11/9/13	821
4	Kade Weber	RUPC	2/8/14	793
5	Pete Rubish	RUPC	2/8/14	788
6	Michael Eaton	RAW	9/14/13	782
7	SEAN GREEN	IPA	9/21/13	770
8	Ernie Lilliebridge Jr	UPA	4/20/13	755
8	Mark Ferris	USPA	12/7/13	755
10	David Jasiulewicz	RPS	9/15/13	750
11	Greg Panora	APF	5/18/13	749
11	Lance Hickey	RUPC	2/9/14	749
13	John Bieg	USPA	1/25/14	738
14	Ron Walling	SPF	10/26/13	735
14	CASEY WILLIAMS	IPA	11/16/13	735
16	Jason Colley	UPA	4/20/13	727
16	Brian Hopper	APF	10/5/13	727
18	Dave Jasiulewicz	RPS	5/18/13	725
18	Chris Claus	RPS	11/16/13	725
18	Rob Geriak	RPS	1/25/14	725
21	Dallas Reilly	IPL	11/9/13	722
22	John Lyras	RPS	10/6/13	720
23	Jared Dale	USPA	10/5/13	716
24	Greg Nuckols	IPA	5/18/13	710
25	Bob Eucker	USAPL	4/13/13	705
25	Thomas O'Malley	USAPL	8/10/13	705
25	Michael Bartos	RPS	10/6/13	705
25	Gary Grissinger	IPL	11/9/13	705
25	Lucas Kailing	UPA	2/15/14	705
25	Nick Tylutki	NAPF	2/28/14	705
31	Edward Christie	USAPL	3/23/13	702
31	Christie, Edward	USAPL	3/23/13	702
33	Christopher Claus	IPA	3/23/13	700
33	Dominic Constantino	IPA	3/23/13	700
33	Chuck Brightbill	RPS	9/28/13	700
33	Adam Pine	RPS	10/13/13	700
33	Joshua Smith	SPF	10/26/13	700
33	Kevin Oak	RPS	11/16/13	700
33	Eric Prush	RPS	2/22/14	700
40	Andy Huang	APA	4/20/13	699
40	Ray Kotschwar	USSF	8/31/13	699
40	Andy Rohner	USPA	10/19/13	699
40	Phillip Marcis	USPA	1/25/14	699
44	Aaron Boyd	USAPL	7/20/13	688
45	Kansas Wegener	RPS	6/1/13	685
46	Brad Southern	USPA	10/12/13	684
47	Jeff Thiele	USAPL	3/23/13	683
47	Quintin Meyer	NASA	11/9/13	683
47	Matt Disbrow	USPA	1/25/14	683
50	Edward Wilson	RPS	8/10/13	680
50	Mike Hamilton	UPA	11/2/13	680
50	Josh Dakin	USAPL	5/25/13	680

## TOTAL

RANK	ATHLETE	FEDERATION	DATE	LBS.
1	Dan Green	ProRaw	11/17/13	2210
2	Casey Williams	RUPC	2/9/14	2011
3	John Lyras	RPS	10/6/13	2000
3	Greg Panora	APF	5/18/13	2000
3	Joshua Smith	SPF	10/26/13	2000
6	Matt Disbrow	XPC	10/6/13	1905
7	Kevin Oak	RPS	11/16/13	1900
7	Ron Walling	SPF	10/26/13	1900
7	Mark Ferris	IPA	4/6/13	1900
7	David McLeod	RPS	6/8/13	1900
11	Greg Nuckols	IPA	5/18/13	1885
12	Ernie Lilliebridge Jr	UPA	4/20/13	1879
13	Tee Cummings	SPF	3/8/14	1860
14	Pete Rubish	UPA	11/16/13	1851
15	Jason Colley	UPA	4/20/13	1835
15	Jared Dale	USPA	10/5/13	1835
17	Robert DelaRosa	USPA	1/25/14	1829
18	Lance Hickey	RUPC	2/9/14	1824
19	David Jasiulewicz	RPS	9/15/13	1820
20	Tony Chirico	UPA	2/15/14	1818
20	Phillip Mardis	USPA	1/25/14	1818
22	Matt Claussen	UPA	11/16/13	1802
23	Mindis Jurenas	SPF	9/28/13	1800
24	Andy Huang	APA	4/20/13	1796
25	Sean Page	USPA	12/7/13	1785
25	Ron Nichols	UPA	4/20/13	1785
27	Tyson Meyers	NASA	2/15/14	1769
27	MICHAEL MCDONALD	APA	11/9/13	1769
29	Max Aita	SPF	11/2/13	1763
29	Brandon Bruce	USPA	1/25/14	1763
31	David Troutt	APF	6/22/13	1758
32	Matt Quinn	SPF	8/31/13	1755
33	Lucas Kailing	UPA	2/15/14	1752
34	Allen Underwood	IPA	4/6/13	1745
34	Chris Claus	RPS	11/16/13	1745
36	Jeff Irion	SPF	3/23/14	1730
37	Dominic Constantino	IPA	3/23/13	1725
37	Steve Goggins	RUPC	2/9/14	1725
39	Michael Zundelevich	RUPC	2/9/14	1719
40	Bobby Fields	IPA	3/23/13	1715
40	Rob Geriak	RPS	1/25/14	1715
42	Alex Brill	RPS	1/25/14	1710
43	Anthony Vidal	RPS	11/16/13	1705
44	Ryan Conley	APF	10/5/13	1703
44	CHARLIE LYONS	APA	11/9/13	1703
44	Ray Kotschwar	USSF	8/31/13	1703
44	Cody Kloppel	SPF	10/12/13	1703
48	Christopher Claus	IPA	3/23/13	1695
49	Jared Skimmer	USPA	8/25/13	1692
50	Michael Armendariz	USPA	8/3/13	1686
50	Jesse Drach	USPA	8/3/13	1686
50	Anthony Luna	UPA	7/20/13	1686

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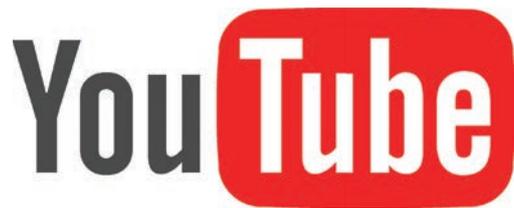
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## Featured YouTube Channel

**JL Holdsworth:** [www.youtube.com/user/THESPOTATHLETICS](http://www.youtube.com/user/THESPOTATHLETICS)



### ABOUT THE CHANNEL:

There are tons of channels on YouTube where you can find instructional lifting videos. But how many are run by guys who have deadlifted 800 lbs., put up top-10 all-time totals and had their name on the Westside Barbell record board? Exactly. That's what makes this channel different. This channel features "Friday Technique Videos," where JL Holdsworth breaks down a particular lift or skill and provides thoughtful analysis and helpful tips.

### ABOUT JL HOLDSWORTH:

JL is the owner of The Spot Athletics, a gym in Columbus, Ohio. His best lifts in powerlifting competitions include a 905 squat, 775 bench, 804 deadlift and 2436 total. His total was the fourth highest of all-time at 275 when he did it back in 2004, and his bench was the biggest bench at Westside. He is one of a select few to ever have their name on the Westside record board, with his bench and total taking down those of Kenny Patterson and Chuck Vogelpohl, respectively. The gym lifts that he is most proud of include a 600-lb. incline bench, 630-lb. bench press and doing a farmers walk with the Thomas Inch dumbbells, which earned him an invite to the 2013 Mighty Mitts Competition at the Arnold Classic to see who has the strongest grip in the world.

### JL'S FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS:

"My education includes a bachelor's in exercise science with a minor in nutrition and several certifications, including CSCS, USAW and TPI. Yes, a golf training certification. And I actually work with one of the best 11-year-old golfers in the country," said Holdsworth. "I've worked as a strength and conditioning coach at Wayne State University and also at the University of Kentucky." Between his education and his accomplishments, the message is clear: When JL talks about lifting, you should listen.

### ABOUT THE SPOT ATHLETICS:

"We opened in 2011," said Holdsworth. "Our philosophy is that whether

we are working with a seven- or 70-year-old, we are going to train them like an athlete. This means they will move better, be stronger, and feel better doing whatever tasks their life demands, whether it's playing with their kids or playing a professional sport."

### WHAT SETS THE SPOT ATHLETICS APART:

"Our staff must meet three requirements. 1.) They must intern under me before they can train people. 2.) They must all train together. We shut down M-F from 11-2 so the staff can train. 3.) They must be training to compete and get better in something, whether it's a grip competition, powerlifting, Strongman, running, etc. It doesn't matter what, but everyone must be competing in something. I feel that if you have skin in the game and you know what it's like to depend on a program working to get you results, then you will treat your clients' programs with the same care because you understand what is on the line."

### FUN FACT ABOUT THE FRIDAY TECHNIQUE VIDEOS:

"I do all of them in one take, with no notes. We just think of exercises, I go over it in my head, then we hit record and I start talking."

### OUR FAVORITE VIDEO:

EliteFTS.com Friday Technique Video — Bench Grip. JL explains how placing the bar too low in the hands when benching can cause the wrists to bend back and, in turn, create lockout problems. While it might seem like a minor detail, that's exactly what makes this channel great: It's a top level lifter sharing tips and tricks that he learned from hands-on experience with heavy-ass weights.

### THE SPOT ATHLETICS ONLINE:

"Subscribe to our YouTube channel and like us on Facebook," said Holdsworth. "Athletes interested in online training programs can email me (JL@TheSpotAthletics.com) and/or go to [www.TheSpotAthletics.com](http://www.TheSpotAthletics.com) to get more info."

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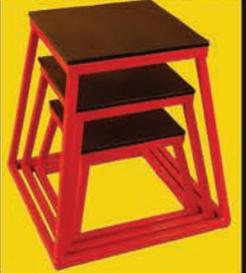


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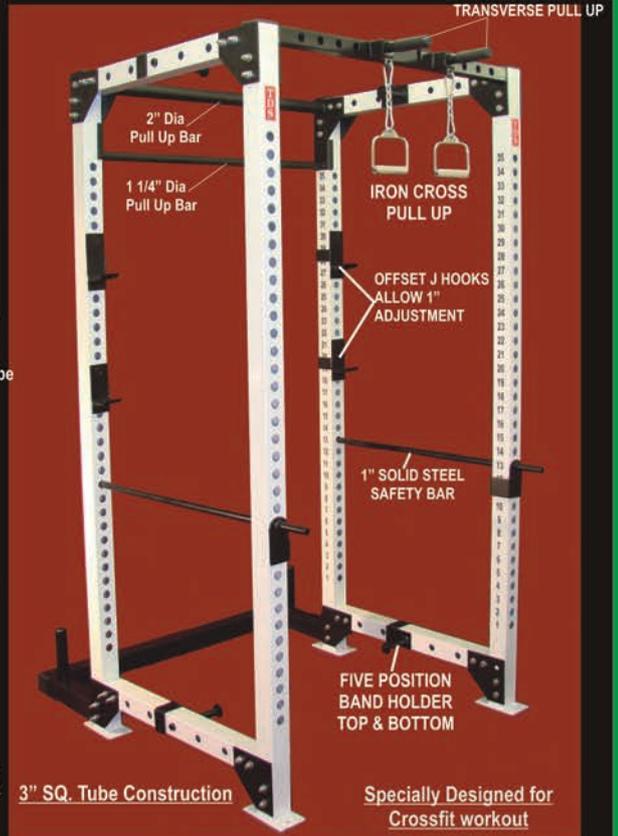
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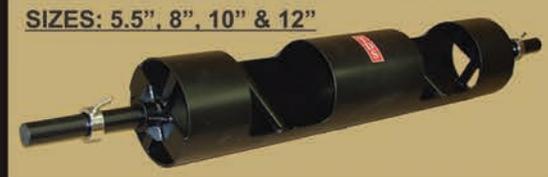
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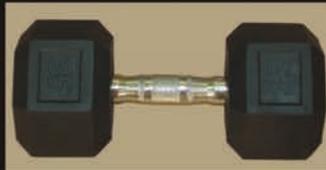
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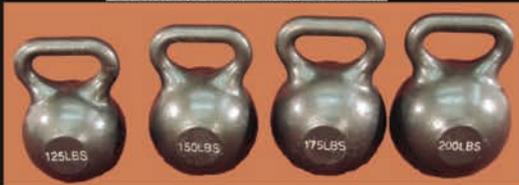


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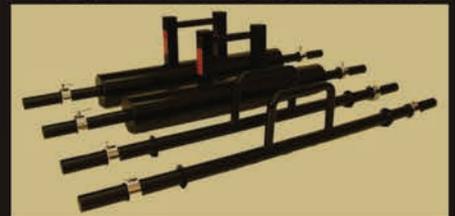
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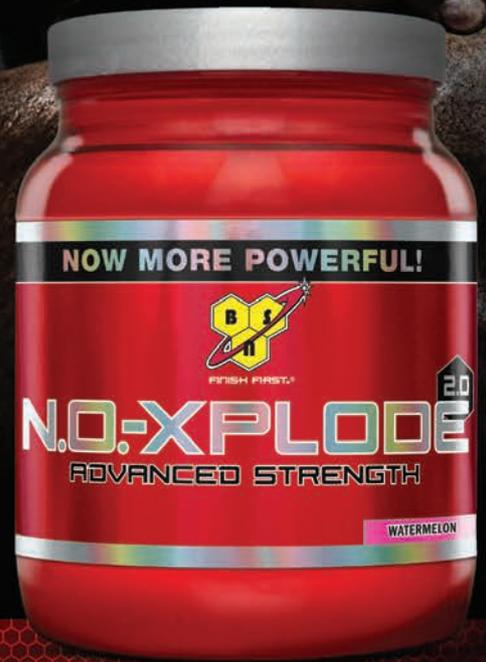
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