

JACKSONVILLE, FLA., IS THE HOME OF YEAR-ROUND SUNSHINE, BEAUTIFUL BEACHES AND TOP-RANKED POWERLIFTER BRIAN CARROLL. A TOP10-RANKED LIFTER IN THE 220-, 242- AND 275-LB. WEIGHT CLASSES, CARROLL IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW CONSISTENT TRAINING LEADS TO CONSISTENT PROGRESS. NOT ONLY DOES HE UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GREAT LIFTER, HE APPLIES THEM WITH AN INTENSITY THAT HAS EARNED HIM HIS PLACE AMONG THE VERY BEST IN MULTI-PLY POWERLIFTING.

POWER: You have become a well-rounded lifter in recent years, which has not always been the case. What do you attribute this to?

CARROLL: Failures and weaknesses. Failure exploits weaknesses — and I hate, but love, the challenge of fixing issues. My squat had issues with depth at times, so I fixed this by working deeper in training and having my guys call my depth on every squat over 900 lbs.

For the longest time my squat was my bread-and-butter lift. For example, when I first squatted 1,000 lbs., I followed the next attempt with the all-time world record (at 220) of 1,030 lbs. This attempt was to break Chuck Vogelpohl's squat record, which hadn't been touched or even challenged by anyone but him for about five years. When you compare my 1,030-lb. squat to my 633 bench and 710 deadlift, it's obvious that there wasn't very much balance there. I pushed my squat up so much that it actually hurt my deadlift (which fell about 50 lbs.) and my bench just flat-out sucked. I worked on bringing up the other lifts, and within a year I had gotten my deadlift back up to 750 and drove my bench up over 700 lbs. Since then, I have brought both my bench and dead to +/- 800 lbs. on any given meet, and my best squat in meet is 1,145 lbs.

POWER: In correcting these imbalances, how has your training evolved?

CARROLL: My training evolved with my meet results over the years and the adjustments I had made to address my training weaknesses. For the longest time, I could get away with not touching on bench in training while still building my lockout the whole cycle, and still nail the benches in the meet. But this changed after I injured my shoulder and pec in 2009. After that, I lost all of my confidence in the bench. I only just gained it back at the end of 2010 after training with a lot of low board work and form work. This is just an example, but I always work on weaknesses to improve them or eliminate them.

POWER: How do you decide what adjustments need to be made?

CARROLL: I have my own training system that I developed over the years. I have learned things from the late Rick Hussey, Louie Simmons, Dave Tate, Shawn Frankl, Adam Driggers and Kiefer. I also make a lot of adjustments by trial and error, listening to my body, and instinct.

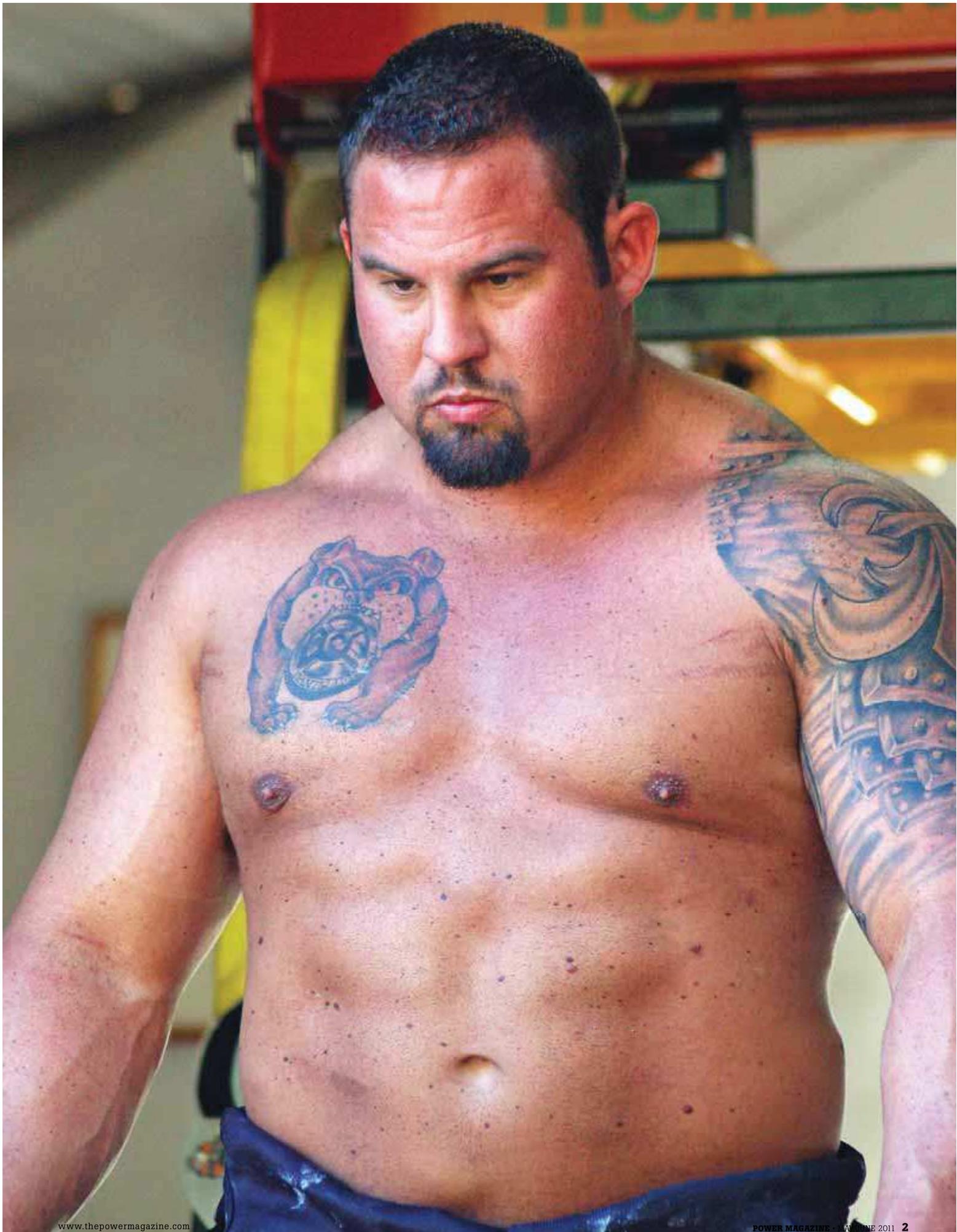
POWER: What drives you to keep going despite your injuries?

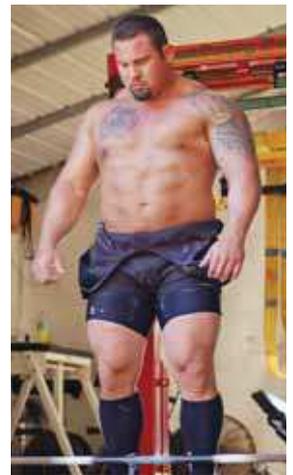
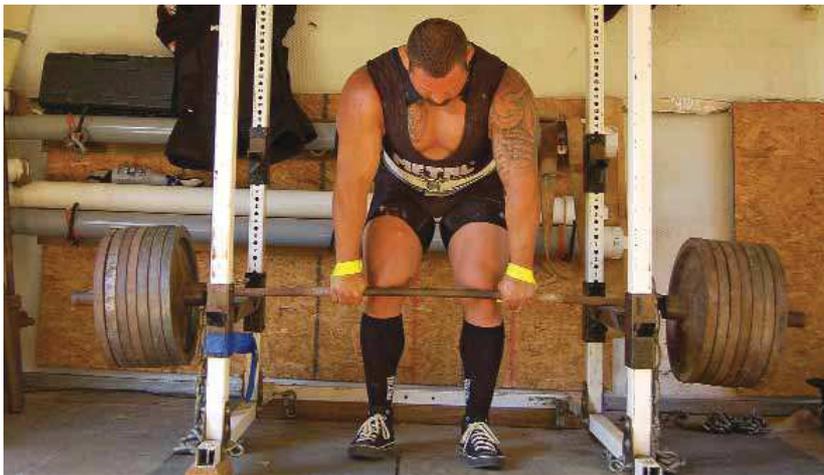
CARROLL: I am driven by constantly working to be my best. I realize that one day I will not be able to do this, and I don't want to leave untapped potential on the table. I did that with baseball in high school and I don't want to live with regret again.

CHASING THE ALL-TIME TOTAL

A Conversation with Brian Carroll

BY MICHELE ATKINSON • photo by Eric Spinney





POWER: What about your competition? Are you externally motivated by other lifters?

CARROLL: Frankl and Dave Hoff come to mind as the best multi-ply lifters around, which motivates me but at the same time pisses me off and gets my ass in gear. I want to stay on the top for as long as possible and always be in the mix until I can no longer do this. I feel that I can hang for a while yet. I still have a lot more in the tank and a lot of potential, especially in the deadlift and bench. I should have benched and deadlifted 825 to 850 lbs. by now – but that’s powerlifting and why it’s extremely hard to hit big lifts consistently. And, it is what makes powerlifting addicting. My team (Samson) also drives me and makes me accountable to push it hard and be smart at the same time. I wouldn’t be anything without those guys, as well as my wife. She is unbelievable, and helpful with everything to do with lifting.

POWER: Who do you learn from?

CARROLL: Anyone and everyone. If you think that you know it all and can’t learn or take advice from anyone – especially someone with more experience or who does it better or more efficient than you – then you, my friend, are a fool. I’m always open to suggestion to new and efficient ways to do anything, within reason. You never know how such a small detail that’s pointed out to you could really benefit you.

POWER: What are your long-term goals?

CARROLL: My long-term goal is to chase the all-time total, regardless of weight class. This has to be the biggest and most lofty goal, but I honestly believe that I can push toward it and at least give it a ride. Some people may laugh at this goal, but the people laughing are probably the same ones who crushed me when I was totaling 1,700 to 1,800 lbs. in 2003. Seriously though, I do believe that I can possibly push toward it. Why not set the goal to be the biggest and best? Pretty soon the All-Time record (my goal) in my weight class will be within 100 lbs of the All-Time total anyway, once Hoff crushes 2800, so I might as well keep going once I break 2800. The short version is I want to be the best I can be, and where that leaves me, I’m fine with it.

POWER: You mentioned Dave Hoff. What is it like chasing him to the all-time record at 275?

CARROLL: Impossible to do! No, I’m kidding, but the way that freak took off like he did in 2009 and 2010, it will be very tough to catch him. In 2008 at the Pro-Am, I remember thinking that if Hoff could get his squat back, he would crush us. I ended up beating him by about 120 lbs. (the difference between our squats) and also out-

benched him by 5 lbs. I guess getting injured in 2009 didn’t really help my cause, but that’s not a reason or excuse. Injuries happen to everyone, including Hoff.

Yarmbash is in a league of his own, and probably whenever he decides to come back to multi-ply, he will push it to 2,900 lbs. or the all-time total record in all divisions – which he could easily do. I just hope he gets bored or finds another hobby being something other than a freak lifter, or gets married or something horrible like that (sarcasm dripping).

As far as the record goes, I would really like to hit it. But most likely, by the time this issue prints, Hoff will have already done so, to about 2,820 lbs., so regardless I need to go over 2,800 lbs. and there is not a doubt in my mind or body that I will do it within the year. I am also considering going back down to 242 lbs. and giving that record another go, as well. My body weight is down right now (about 265 from 280 lbs.), so I may just do it. I’m really disappointed that I never broke 2,600 at 242 lbs., but I can make this change, right? It’s never too late. Having both records would be cool, but there is a reason why Panora has held the record for five years. It’s a feat.

POWER: What is your general weekly training template?

CARROLL: Saturday: squat; Monday: bench; Tuesday: deadlift; Thursday: weakpoint and assistance work.

If it wasn’t for work conflicts and other issues with timing, I would space out my bench and dead to two days apart, but I do the best with what I can while running a business and trying to fit in my with team’s training schedule.

POWER: What is your diet like?

CARROLL: I have Kiefer help me with this. He keeps me accountable. If I do attempt to go 242 lbs., he will help me dial it in by using his carb backloading system (Read about this diet in the Jan/Feb 2011 issue of Power). I usually eat pretty clean and have a balance of the right stuff without too much junk. In the off-season I tend to eat pretty much what I want, and in the pre-competition mode I eat to be strong; therefore I eat much cleaner.

POWER: You are coming out with an e-book. Tell us about it.

CARROLL: I’m working on an e-book that will explain the methods of how I train, including the reasoning and the science behind it. It will show some training cycles for meets where I’ve had some great success, and it will also teach readers how to listen to their bodies and train instinctively. There are many e-books out there, but most are just made for the sake of printing a training idea or the like. My e-book is about a tried-and-true, proven system that works

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for all lifters, whether raw, single or multi-ply. It teaches how to get stronger and not over-train, and how to learn from the mistakes I have made and what movements and strategies have worked the best for me, along with having the lowest risk of injury.

POWER: What is it like to be married to a smokin' hot figure chick?

CARROLL: It's awesome. Not only is she nice to look at, but she's an awesome supporter and cook. She has great advice and gives me a good perspective on things. I'm very bull-headed and she helps balance me out and helps me think of the other side and the big picture. She was one of the ones who really pushed for me to talk to Dave Tate about EliteFTS, when I was debating it and weighing all options. She was all for it and thought it would be a great move, whereas I'm much more a creature of habit and like being comfortable. It was the correct choice and, yes, Ria was right again. Tate and Elite are awesome.

POWER: Speaking of Elite, can you explain a little more about why it's so awesome?

CARROLL: Being with EliteFTS is much more than just posting a log and getting free gear. Being a part of Elite is about being part of something more than just a sponsorship. It's about representing more than a brand of gear like Metal, Inzer or Titan or whatever. It's just a benefit. It's about being part of a group of guys who want to brand themselves, and Elite gives that opportunity. We have an opportunity to reach people via our training logs and we get a lot of exposure that most wouldn't get otherwise, since the lifting world is so small. Basically you have influence and exposure that you most definitely wouldn't have the opportunity to have without them. Look at Tate, Jim Wendler and Shelby Starnes, who have really made a name for themselves and built a brand. That is something that I desire and strive to do. Obviously Tate has built up way more than just a following, but you see what I'm saying. Also, having the opportunity to come together at something like an UGSS is a great experience. Tate brings us all out to Ohio to train, B.S. and share ideas with one another. It's one of the best ideas and most fun that I have ever had. Other sponsors don't have anything like this to offer.

Many people ask what it's like. I say that it's the cream-of-the-crop of sponsorships. The possibilities are endless, and so is the amount of exposure you can receive. Look at Matt Kroc. The dude is in every magazine you can think of for Muscle Tech ads. I know that Elite had quite a bit to do with that connection. He is the first powerlifter (that I know of) to get a real supplement contract. Awesome! Tate and Elite have also given me the opportunity to receive great supplements from Biotest (which can be purchased on Elite or T-Nation) and I love them. They are by far the best supplements I have ever used, and have great quality and taste.

Having the ability to share my philosophies and training outlook is one of the best things. How else would people know what you are doing and why you are doing it? I take pride in posting my training log and enjoy helping others and receiving questions from the readers and log followers. I have met a ton of great people this way, and made lots of great friends by joining Elite's team of sponsored lifters. I really can't say enough great things about it.

POWER: What advice can you give other lifters?

CARROLL: Listen, and be slow to talk and debate. Listen, follow and experience. Too many knuckleheads jump out of the blocks and think they know everything. Even if they hit some good totals and have lots of potential, their growth will be retarded by their closed-mindedness. Surround yourself with people with goals and ones that want to get better.

POWER: What would you tell someone who has never powerlifted, but wants to start?

CARROLL: Watch a lot of videos and talk to as many lifters and you can. Observe some meets and watch lifters train. It's much different than being a strong gym rat. Being good at this sport is very hard to do, and it's especially hard to stay healthy going into a meet. Something is always achy or sore.

POWER: How do you feel about the sport of powerlifting at the present time?

CARROLL: It's sad. I'm working now to help organize the lifters' Pro-Am (not the meet) like Louie's, but in Florida and in January. I want to get something like the WPO used to be. That was awesome, and it's a shame it didn't work out. What I'm trying to do is get the top lifters on the same page and

get another big SPF meet going in Jacksonville with a great venue and location, the best of everything equipment-wise, to attract the top lifters. People do like Florida and it's very nice year-round, although a bit hot in the summertime. You can't beat this: You have the beach within 15 minutes of anywhere in the Jax, beautiful weather and another top meet with cash and the best multi-ply meet lifters for a second round of what the Pro-Am offers. We lifters need to get on the same page, though, so the top lifters can meet more than just one time of the year. Some people seem to doubt it, but it can happen. I think this would be a great step in the right direction for powerlifting. Eric Talmant did a great job with the raw unity and built a lot of excitement with it. I hope to get the lifters back interested in knowing and realizing that we have the power to do this and if we can agree on the same meets per year, then this can happen. Too many top lifters spread all throughout the country competing on the same weekend or same month, but not head to head. We need to fix this, and we can. **PM**

For more information about Brian Carroll, check out his training logs on EliteFTS.com and keep an eye out for his e-book.



BRIAN'S STATS

BEST OFFICIAL LIFTS:

220 – 1,030 Squat, 633 Bench, 755 Dead – 2,375 TOT
242 – 1,052 Squat, 785 Bench, 771 Dead – 2,570 TOT
275 – 1,145 Squat, 785 Bench, 800 Dead – 2,700 TOT

GEAR:

Squat – (size) 50 ACE briefs, 58 ACE squat suit
Bench – (size) 56 ACE bench shirt
Dead – (size) 52 KING Deadlift suit

BIG NUMBERS:

1,000+ lb. squats done in competition: 25
1,050+ lb. squats done in competition: 15
1,100+ lb. squats done in competition: 6