

ANDY BOWEN

interviewed for *Powerlifting USA* by Ben Tatar of *Critical Bench*

Critical Bench: Andy, tell us about yourself.

Andy Bowen: I am 30 years old and I live in Greenville, AL. I am the strength and conditioning coach for Alabama Christian Academy in Montgomery, AL. I have the undeserved privilege to be married to a wonderful woman, Julie, and we have one child, Sarah. I am a member of the South Alabama Barbell Team and I have been lifting since I was 14, but I have only been lifting competitively for about 8 years. Strength has fascinated me from a very early age.

CB: What fed do you compete in?

AB: Because I am not 100% loyal to any certain federation, I will lift in any fed. I realize that there are a lot of politics in the sport regarding different federations and I try not to get caught up in all of that. I have competed in the WNPf, SPf, and the APA. I do want to say that the APA has some very well-run meets.

CB: What are your best lifts?

AB: Equipped, multi-ply, 198 lb.: 825 SQ, 575 BP, 650 DL, 2050 total. Raw, 198 lb.: 602 SQ, 380 BP, 622 DL, 1604 total.

CB: How did you add 400 lb. to your powerlifting total in just one year?

AB: I came to a point where I felt I had to make a decision about my powerlifting career. Was I going to be satisfied being mediocre and just participating or was I going to do all that it takes to get to the level that I want to be?

I have to give a lot of the credit for that accomplishment to Bobby Myers. At the 2009 APA Raw Nationals, Bobby asked me if he could call my second and third attempts; I said "sure." Now, realize, I came into the meet telling myself that I will be happy with 550/350/600 and when Bobby called for a 600 3rd attempt on the squat, I said "okay," fully expecting to be stapled to the floor. After that successful 600 squat, my confidence in myself and in Bobby's advice went way up. Then in July, I went down to Bobby's place to squat with him and Carol Ann. Leading up to that squat day Bobby kept telling me, "You're gonna do 800 when you come down here." Now, I knew that I would eventually squat 800, but at that point in time I thought 800 was a year away. When I got down there and started my warm-up lifts, I did not even ask what weight was on the bar, I didn't want to know. I spend 5-6 days a week as a strength coach, teaching kids technique, program design and manipulation, and how and why to make decisions in your training and will admit that it was a relief to let someone else call my weights and reps. All that I was required to focus on that night was staying tight and moving weight. That was sort of a milestone in my training.

Also, really focusing in on staying tight during my lifts (I will soon be submitting an article on staying tight on powerliftingtoday.com) has given me the ability to get under heavy weight and stay smooth and stable.

CB: What has it been like working with Shawn Bud Lyte?

AB: I met Shawn at the 2009 APA Raw nationals and my first impression was "nice guy." That opinion of Shawn has not changed since then. It has been a pleasure being sponsored by Bud and BMF Sports. He is a kind and giving person, but at the same time he is a sharp business man who is trying to take sport of powerlifting where it deserves to go—pro.

CB: What are your future goals?

AB: I am big on goals, from daily goals to career goals. A few are:

- 700 DL by next fall
- 600 BP before summer
- 2010 APA Raw Nationals: 650/425/650
- Squat 900 in 2010
- Squat 1000 in the 220s in 2011
- 2200 total in 2010
- 2010 Raw Unity Meet: 585/400/650

I have many more long and short term goals, but these are the big ones.

CB: Tell us about your powerlifting routine?

AB: In my thoughts, I have tried to define my training program, but basically I lift heavy weights until I injure something, then I take a week off. I hate light weight, I mean really, I friggin' hate light weight. I can't get up for it. It's not fun. That said, I stick to 5's, 3's, and 1's at 80-100% of my maxes. I do not do any DE work for my squat or bench press. I have tried it in the past and didn't get much from it. I do some DE work for my DL because the way I pull requires a very fast pull off of the floor. I do have a plan leading up to a meet that mostly just includes numbers that I need to hit during the weeks before the meet, but again, it is not very structured. I am a believer that almost anything (within reason) works, and that the keys to success are things like having goals, staying focused, and having a fanatical drive to move heavy weight.

CB: What did you do differently when you added 400 lb. to your powerlifting total?

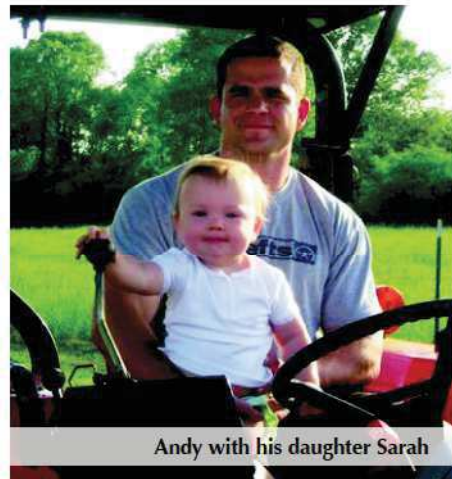
AB: I just continued to perfect my technique on all three lifts. It is amazing how much you can continue to improve technique even after many years of training.

CB: Tell us about your diet.

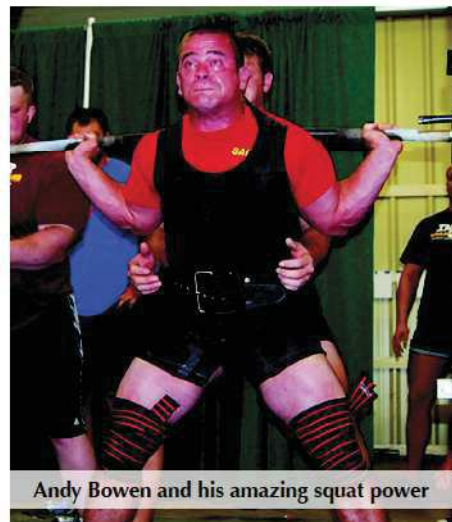
AB: A lot of milk. I go through about 5 gallons a week. Also a lot of eggs, chicken and beef. We live in the country so family and neighbors are always giving us vegetables that they grow. Oh, and pizza.



Benching at the '09 APA Raw Nationals



Andy with his daughter Sarah



Andy Bowen and his amazing squat power

CB: What do you enjoy doing away from the gym?

AB: I love spending time with my family. My little girl is 18 months old and loves being outside and my wife is my best friend, so I love family time. I am a certified gearhead. I am happiest when my hands are covered in oil, grease and diesel fuel. It is good that I enjoy working on things because my truck, tractor, etc. is always breaking down. I also enjoy working and hunting on our family farm. We have about 300 or so acres and some livestock.

CB: What are your top 5 tips for a bigger squat,

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bench and deadlift?

AB: You CANNOT overtrain technique. Any flaws in your form WILL result in lower meet numbers.

Technique is about more than the way you move with the weight, things like setting up correctly and staying tight are also important.

In the beginning, keep it simple. Reverse band dynamic effort cambered bar high box squats with chains might be useful later in your career, but early on a bar, some plates and a power rack will give you the most results.

Learn to use your abs on all three lifts. No matter how strong your arms, legs and chest are, you will not move big weight if you can't stabilize your body.

Train consistently. Unless you are Ed Coan, Joe Ladnier, or the like, you will not be a world champion in the first year. It will take time. You have to have hours under the bar. Rome wasn't built in a day and world champions take years of consistent training to develop.

I will say it again. Technique. Seriously. It's important.

CB: What goes through your mind before maxing out?

AB: Nothing, hopefully. If I am prepared and in the correct mindset I am pretty much blank other than an overall feeling of invincibility.

CB: How do you celebrate after accomplishing a huge strength feat?

AB: I might celebrate a little right after a big lift, but if it is a first or second attempt, my thoughts move quickly to getting ready for the next attempt. Even after a successful big 3rd attempt, I try to start preparing myself for the next event. After totaling 2050 in the 198s at the 2009 APA Irontoberfest you would think that I would be able to relax and celebrate a little, but I immediately started thinking about my next step, new goals and my next meet.

CB: What makes Andy different from everyone else when it comes to training?

AB: That's a tough one. I guess it could be that I do not subscribe to any certain pre-existing training regime. Rather, I take the bits and pieces that I think are worth keeping and forget the rest. Who knows? Maybe everybody does that.

CB: How do you want to be remembered?

AB: As a hard working, kind, helpful, Christian husband, father, and powerlifter.

CB: Where do you train?

AB: I train at a few different places. I do a lot of training at the YMCA in Greenville, but the equipment there is very limited so when I need to hit very heavy numbers, I go down to Body By Scotty in Hartford, AL, because Scotty has a Monolift, DL bar, chains, bands, and most importantly that is where my team, South Alabama Barbell, is based. I am fortunate to be able to train at work a lot. Our facility is the nicest in the city of Mont-

gomery and I enjoy training with the kids. As I mentioned before, I also travel down to Bobby and Carol Ann Myers place from time to time.

CB: What adversities have you had to overcome?

AB: I have been very lucky in that the biggest stumbling block I have had to deal with is juggling work, family, etc. with training, but those are the things everybody faces. Other than that, I do have pretty crappy genetics. All of the men in my family had great strength, but I got none of that. I have had to scrape and fight for everything.

CB: In closing, who would you like to thank?

AB: I would like to thank my gorgeous wife for putting up with my choice of being a powerlifter. She is a real trooper for dealing with me being away from home and for putting up with all of the other stuff that comes with being married to me. Thank you to Scotty Cox for all of his help and guidance and for so graciously letting me use his facility free of charge. Thank you to Malcolm, Wes, Skylar, Gabe, David, Scott, Zach, and the rest of the South Alabama Barbell team. Thank you to Bobby and Carol Ann Myers for all of their help and support. Thank you to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for gracing me with the good health and the abilities to do what I do. Oh, and thank you for the interview. I got to feel like a big shot for a few minutes even though I'm not. «