

Ryan Celli's reputation precedes him. He's an established raw and equipped lifter. Recently he broke the USPF 220 pound class bench record with a 639 press. He also won best lifter in last year's Raw Unity Meet. Ryan has his own training facility called Celli's Fitness.

Here at Critical Bench we try to help gyms and lifters out by sponsoring meets when we can. This time it's our turn to thank the Cellis, John Casciato and the entire Celli's Fitness team for lending us a helping hand. You see we've been participating in breast cancer fund raiser and Ryan's gym was our major sponsor, contributing close to a grand to help the cause.

We're excited to get started with the interview. Meet super bencher Ryan Celli!

**BT:** Ryan, congratulations on breaking bench press legend Chris Confessore's bench record in the USPF. Thanks for the interview opportunity. Introduce yourself to the readers.

**RC:** I'm 34 year old gym owner and personal trainer. I live in Bridgeville, PA. I've been married for 9 years to my wife, Dana. We have a 4 year old son, Noah. I love to compete and try to do at least one full power meet per year. In June of 2007, Dana and I opened Celli's Fitness Center in the city of Pittsburgh. The gym is in Lawrenceville and is steadily growing with talented lifters; you can see many pictures of them at [www.cellisfitness.com](http://www.cellisfitness.com).

**BT:** Life sounds good. Ryan you won best lifter at the 2008 Raw Unity Meet in both full power and bench only! How would you describe your winning experience at the RUM?

**RC:** Winning the Raw Unity Meet was awesome. Eric Talmant and his wife Denise couldn't have done a better job. I've been competing for 19 years and have to say it was one of the best organized meets I've ever competed in.

What made the meet exceptional for me was the fact that I was able to win the full power meet as well as the bench only. I originally wanted to enter the bench only to get a chance to compete against some of the best 198 raw bench pressers. Then I had the idea of competing in both. I called Eric and asked him if it would be possible to enter the bench only and full meet, he said yes. So that is what I did and ended up winning best lifter in both. I can't wait till next year, hopefully even more competitors show.

**BT:** We have to agree the Raw Unity Meet was a huge success. You just went down in history as the first winner! Ryan, you just set an American record in the 220 class, benching 639. Tell us about that. What was it like setting the record and what you did to celebrate after?

**RC:** Well, Scott Rowe broke Chris Confessore's 18 year old record of 618 on June 29th at USPF Nationals, I benched 622.7 at the same meet at 198 as a full meet lifter. I knew I could bench more at a higher weight class and not having to squat first. When I saw the listing for the New Martintville USPF meet I knew that was my chance. In the meantime, Aug 2nd Ryan Girard set the mark even higher with a 633. I still knew I could do more than that. I weighted in at 211 the morning of the meet, opened with 606 and went right for the record with a 639.2. I still had my third attempt and thought I'd try to up it even more with a 644, it didn't go! It was exciting, as that was not only a new American record, but a personal best for me, which is even more important.

**BT:** Strategic move going for the record on your 2nd attempt. Ryan, how does it feel to be a world record holder right now?

**RC:** I'm lovin' it and enjoying every minute because I know there are people right on my tail. Records don't always last 18 years anymore.

**BT:** How long have you been powerlifting? Were you always very strong?

**RC:** I started powerlifting when I was 15 years old. I entered my first

## INTERVIEW

### RYAN CELLI - RISING STAR

by Ben Tatar of [CriticalBench.com](http://CriticalBench.com)



Ryan Celli is a spectacular new strength star - raw or equipped.

bench meet in September of 1989. I benched 175 raw in the 114 class and won 1st place. I only weighted 110 at 5' 6". I've been hooked ever since.

**BT:** Wow, a lot has changed since you were that 15 year old kid! How did you become interested in powerlifting?

**RC:** My stepfather Jack was into lifting and had some equipment set up in our garage. I remember him having Powerlifting USA's laying around that I would always read. He always wanted me to try lifting weights. When I finally gave in, he was amazed at my bench press strength and trained me for my first bench meet.

**BT:** Well, here you are today in Powerlifting USA telling the world about the world record you have just achieved! Amazing! What is your usual weight class?

**RC:** I usually weigh around 205-210 and compete at 198. I've competed in every weight class from 114 to 220 and have totaled elite in the 148, 165, 181, 198.

**BT:** Being successful in both equipped and non equipped lifting, do you prefer to lift with gear or raw?

**RC:** I train and compete both equipped and non-equipped. I love and respect both. I believe equipped is healthier and easier on your joints.

**BT:** How do you see the future of powerlifting changing?

**RC:** I see powerlifting losing all credibility with the poor judging

and multiply gear and most importantly all the new organizations popping up every day along with all the divisions available.

I also see it reaching its all time low, and rebounding back into a legitimate raw and single ply sport, maybe even a legit multi-ply with strict rules of performance. The problem is, the general public just doesn't understand the gear. They automatically think it's cheating. So even though I'm all for wearing gear, I'm afraid the sport won't ever make it with us using it exclusively. Have you ever tried to explain to someone outside the sport what a bench shirt is?

**BT:** Something to think about. You are more than just a bench press anomaly freak of nature, you are also good at other lifts. What are your best lifts?

**RC:** Some of my best lifts are a 530 raw bench, 700 raw deadlift, a 2000 single ply USPF total, and a 1756 raw total. I recently benched 622.7 in the 198's single ply, which was a WPF World record and USPF American record.

**BT:** What are your current goals? What are your long term goals?

**RC:** My current RAW goals at 198 are to bench press 550 and total 1800. I recently just reached another goal I had. I wanted to total 2000 in single ply at 198 and was able to do so this year at the USPF Nationals June 29th 2008. Long term goals are to stay healthy and continue to compete.

**BT:** What is your proudest moment in powerlifting?

**RC:** Winning both the Best lifter and Best bencher at the Raw Unity meet and taking home \$900, and then 3 weeks later winning the USPF American Cup Best lifter and taking home \$1000 and a new American bench record of 584. This record meant a lot to me as it has not been broken for 20 years; In June I was able to bump this record up to 622.7.

**BT:** That is incredible! Describe your training.

**RC:** I train 3 days a week. Monday - squat, Wednesday - bench, and Friday - deadlift.

Simple! I don't really follow any set training regime other than the set training days. I train by feel, and always try to go heavy. If I feel beat up I may do some speed work.

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I use kettlebells, frequently and believe they have helped my strength, flexibility and upper back size.

**BT:** Who do you train with?

**RC:** I train alone most of the time. When training for a competition I always have support from gym members. We always come together to help one another when someone is getting ready for a competition.

**BT:** Do you have any advice for beginners?

**RC:** Learn the lifts, the form and technique, the weight will come. Eat, sleep, rest and only train 3 days a week. Talk to all the lifters you can and learn from them. Compete as much as possible. Most beginners are reluctant to start competing, but I feel you need to regardless of your strength in order to learn and improve. There are a growing number of professional powerlifters available on Wannabebig.com.

**BT:** Out of the squat, bench and deadlift, what is your favorite lift?

**RC:** I love all three lifts.

**BT:** What is your least favorite lift?

**RC:** I hate good mornings for some reason.

**BT:** What are some important dos and don'ts?

**RC:** Get plenty of rest and listen

to your body. When you feel beat up and need a break, take one!

**BT:** How do you mentally prepare for a contest?

**RC:** Mentally I try to be positive. I use a lot of visualization. I see myself doing everything from chalking up, to walking up to the bar and executing the lift in the most controlled explosive manner imaginable. I see the three white lights and hear the crowd go wild.

**BT:** What goes through your mind during and after completing a huge lift?

**RC:** I stay calm and try to channel my energy into the lift. After the completion of a lift I try and remember exactly how it felt so I can duplicate it next time.

**BT:** What do you enjoy doing away from powerlifting?

**RC:** I'd say powerlifting is pretty much my life, but other than that I enjoy spending time with my wife and son, riding my motorcycle, fishing, eating out, going to see a good movie, and hanging out with friends and family.

**BT:** Do you take any supplements?

**RC:** I'm honored to be sponsored by At Large Nutrition and have been using mostly their products. I use their Opticen, Nitrean, Results, ETS, creatine monohydrate, fish oil, and multivitamin. I also use flax oil,

garlic, and a green drink.

**BT:** Do you have any favorite quotes or sayings that have helped you become as successful as you are today?

**RC:** You can do anything you put your mind to.

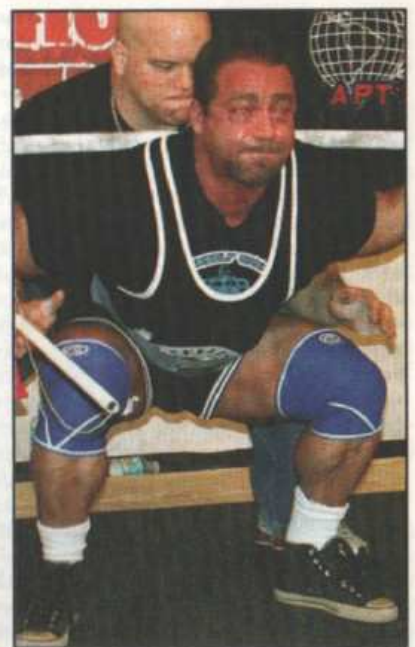
**BT:** Ryan, you are living proof of that! You have set the record and we are looking forward to seeing what you have in store next. It has been an honor talking to you today. In closing is there anyone who you would like to thank?

**RC:** First and foremost, I'd like to thank my wife Dana, for believing in me and always being there and supporting me no matter what I decide to do.

I'd like to thank Critical Bench for the opportunity to do this interview.

I'd like to thank my sponsors, Alan Thomas from APT Pro Gear, Chris Mason from At Large Nutrition, Pete Alaniz from Titan Support Systems, Ken Anderson from Anderson Powerlifting, and Ty and James from Supplement Central.

I'd like to thank everyone from Celli's Fitness for always being there for me when I need them, Fei Lung for the incredible photos he takes for the Celli's web site, and Natty Freed for



Ryan is not just a one lift wonder (CB)

taking care of the Celli's Fitness website. I'd also like to thank my massage therapist Amie Marx. I can't leave out John Casciato, he's always there for me whenever I need anything. I rely on him for his valuable training advice, motivation and keen eye for technical errors. My training sessions and competitions always go better when I have him with me. Thanks everyone!