

INTERVIEW

MIKE MARTIN as interviewed by Paul Leonard



Mike Martin squatting 772 pounds in competition. (courtesy Leonard)

As a competitive powerlifter you face many adversities, some major and some just simply annoying. One of the annoying ones, which can either be minor or major, is balancing work with training. I myself always find it interesting what elite level powerlifters do for a living. I know personally that I have worked in situations that were entirely unresponsive of my powerlifting efforts. Be that as it may, I now work in a situation where I only have to turn to my partner, Mike Martin, to speak to someone who knows exactly what I am dealing with trying to balance the demands of work with the drive to always get stronger. Mike Martin is a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General in Dallas, Texas. Mike has best official lifts of a 775 squat, 617 benchpress, a 715 deadlift and a 2080 lb. total. Mike has been able to achieve all of the following while being a law enforcement officer, husband, father of 2 and soon to be 3 boys, drummer in his Church's band, and trainer to various members of Martin's Hardcore Barbell. Let's find out what makes this Michigan-Born Texas powerhouse tick.

PL: Mike, thanks for granting me this interview. Please describe to me what type of training philosophy you believe in and follow.

MM: Thank you for interviewing me, it is an honor to be interviewed for Powerlifting USA. I train following the Westside Barbell principles as explained by Louie Simmons. I hit both my bench and my squats/deadlifts with both a Max Effort (ME) workout every week and a Dynamic Effort (DE) workout as well. On all of my workout days I will hit key assistance effort exercises using the Repetition Effort (RE) method.

PL: What is your feeling on the use of gear in training?

MM: I primarily lift in APF meets so I support the idea of using gear to increase your competition maximum effort lifts. That being said, I still like "old school" type strength and trying to just lift a heavy weight all by myself or "raw" as they say.

PL: I will add to your point, Mike, because you are far too humble to tell people about your strength, but I will. I have seen Mike floor press 500 lbs. raw on more than one occasion. The most impressive time was at the Federal Law Enforcement Academy gym in the summer of 2006 after Mike had been running up to 5 miles per day, swimming for 2 hours and going through the weekly grind of the Special Agent Academy.

MM: I truly believe that my training as a law enforcement officer has assisted my powerlifting by allowing me to hone my mental focus and being able to enact that correct fight or flight response when a heavy weight is in my hands.

PL: Your best bench, 617, was done in a single ply bench shirt correct?

MM: Yes it was. I did that bench at 245 lbs. wearing a large Titan F6.

PL: Finish this sentence for me please, 'The lift I am most proud of is...'

MM: My 715 deadlift, which I did conventional style in a meet wearing only a belt and a singlet.

PL: I can attest to your pulling strength and to the fact that you are as strong conventional as you are in sumo style. This is something that Louie preaches about all the time

and Chuck Vogelpohl demonstrates on the original Westside Deadlift Secrets tape. What do you feel strengthens your deadlift best?

MM: I find that speed squats done to a box with sufficient intensity make my deadlift increase. I like to do speed pulls after my DE box squats. I employ most of the traditional Westside based assistance movements to build a stronger body for bigger deadlifts. Calf ham glute raises, reverse hypers, ab work, lat work, etc. If you've seen the Westside DVDs, there are really no secrets, just hard work topped off by some more hard work build a stronger body that can deadlift more weight. I know that you and I both laugh when we see meet results and there is a huge discrepancy between a lifters squat and deadlift.

PL: You owned a commercial power gym, Martin's Hardcore Barbell, which has closed and is now only a private club. Tell me about that please.

MM: Through the generosity of others I am able to have members of my barbell club train at a private warehouse in Denton, a few miles from where my gym was open. It has worked out really well for me, not trying to maintain a commercial gym while trying to balance all that I have to in my life. I say it has worked because since I have been training at the new location I hit my best total. Stronger is always better period.

PL: What weight class do you compete in Mike?

MM: I have competed at 242 and 275, but currently I am going to lift at 242 or 259 when I do WABDL. I feel healthier at 242 and can keep up with my kids better.

PL: Please list for me some of your best lifts in the following well known Westside ME exercises:

MM: 1 Board bench - 650 lbs; 2 Board bench - 700 lbs; 3 Board bench - 715 lbs; Close grip bench - 405 lbs X 8 reps; Incline Bench - 405 lbs x 2 reps; Floor Press - 500 lbs x1, followed by 405 x 5 reps; Dumbbell bench presses - 110's x 20 reps; Good morning - 500 lbs x 3 reps; Squat against bands - 500 lbs. + blues and greens; Deadlift on jumpstretch platform - 500 + monster minis

PL: Like myself Mike, I know you consider yourself a strength athlete who has done more than powerlifting. Could you tell me about some of the strength exhibitions you have done as a member of Team Impact?

MM: On occasion, I help out Team Impact (a Christian Missionary Team) and travel to churches to bring a positive message to those who are lost. I've been blessed in many ways and I am very fortunate to assist the team when needed. During the Team Impact services, feats of strength are conducted such as: overhead log lifts that are set on fire, breaking stacks of concrete with elbows, forearms, and skull, snapping wooden and aluminum bats, blowing up hot water bottles until they explode, pressing heavy logs for reps on beds of nails, and running through huge walls of ice. It's all done for a higher purpose than showing off or bloating about our personal strength.

PL: This is always one of my favorite questions to ask. Tell me about some things you have seen that impressed you strength-wise in your experience as a strength

(continued on page 102)

(continued from page 18)

athlete:

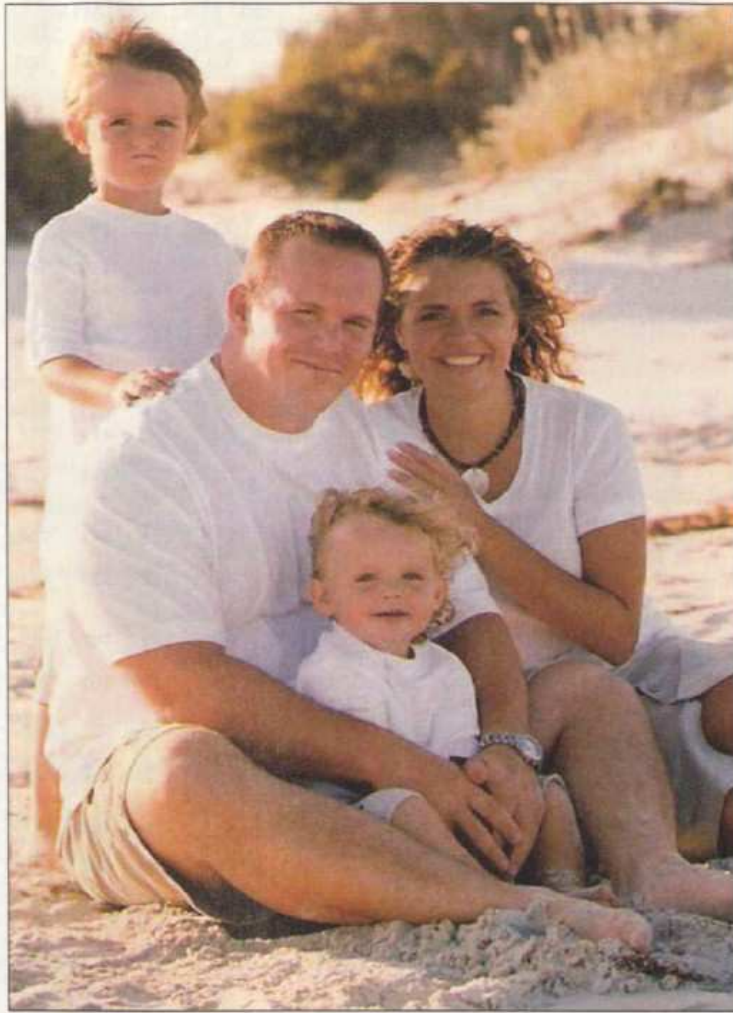
MM: I'm always impressed to hear about others lifting big weights who have rigorous work schedules, lifters who have fought tooth and nail for a 5 pound gain, lifters who are faced with adversity, but yet overcome the obstacles, Master Lifters who are still scratching for a higher total, any bench presses over 700 lbs, and deadlifts over 800 lbs.

PL: Tell me what you think about GPP or doing extra workouts to supplement your four main workouts.

MM: I hit as many GPP workouts as possible. Traveling for my job is difficult, so I'll pack two purple bands and a set of mini bands in my travel bag and just get after it in the parking lot of a gas station. Just making it work for me wherever I go.

PL: Who are some of your favorite lifters and why?

MM: I am a huge Chuck V. fan due to his intensity and work ethic. I cannot say enough about Louie Simmons as far as his selflessness in helping anyone who is interested get strong. Ano Turtainen, I love his posts on Elite Fitness. His video of



doing a safety squat to a box with 881 while inside a torture rack looking device was one of the greatest training clips I have ever seen. Greg Panora impresses the snot out of me. Awesome intensity. I wish Panora and Chuck V. would just leave a camcorder running when they train and sell a DVD of the results once per month. Ryan Kennelly for his insane bench ability.

PL: Anyone you'd like to thank?

MM: First off I want to thank Jesus Christ for paying a debt that he did not owe. I also want to dedicate this article to my mom who has been battling cancer for two years. To my dad who made me the man I am today. To my beautiful and supportive wife Darla and my two sons Micah and Miles. To all the members of Martin's Hardcore Barbell Club, no matter where the club has had to train you have been there to support me. And finally to the best bosses any powerlifter could want, Chuck Haas and Kirk Beauchamp, thanks for letting me bend bars.

Mike Martin with his beautiful family on the beach: wife Darla and his 2 sons Micah and Miles