

INTERVIEW

Personal dialogue between
PL USA Magazine and the
Sport's Greatest Names.

BETSY OJANEN

as interviewed for Powerlifting USA by Bob Gaynor

BG: Please give us some personal information.

BO: My name is Betsy Ojanen. I am 32 years old and am a firefighter/paramedic with the Phoenix Fire Department. My husband, Dann, is a captain/paramedic with Phoenix Fire and makes things a lot easier for me. He's a wonderfully understanding person and my greatest supporter!

BG: How did you get started?

BO: I got started lifting when I graduated from college in 1984. Suddenly, there was no more traveling the country for volleyball games, no track meets, and softball was only a summer activity. I was lost! My older brother literally dragged me into the gym at home (Las Cruces, NM) and had me start lifting with him. Three weeks later I went to my first meet. I was only going to watch him compete, but since there was no one in my weight class, he entered me. Just like that, I was hooked.

BG: What are your best lifts?

BO: Best lifts? Wow, I am one of those that usually does better in the gym than at the meet. My best meet lifts are 462 squat, 245 bench, a 436 deadlift and a best total of 1130. I hold the national and American and WDFPF records in the squat, bench, and total. If only I had a deadlift!

BG: Betsy, what are your future goals?

BO: My future goals are to squat 501 in competition. I tried it a few years ago at the Worlds in France and, well, it went down real nicely! Since then I have had surgery on both of my feet and the comeback for squatting has been a little slow. I would also like to bench 275 and pull a dream 475 deadlift. I'm using Steve Scalpi's deadlift training and he's convinced I can go at least that much; I am almost starting to believe him!

BG: What are your views on steroids?

BO: Steroids are illegal in competition, and they are an illegal substance throughout the United States. Personally I believe that using steroids is wrong. Better lifting through chemistry is not my idea of competition. This sport is about who can put the best squat, bench, and deadlift together in a single day, not who



Betsy Ojanen hauls up a heavy deadlift attempt at the WDFPF Worlds

has had the best chemist in their corner. There have been enough studies, medical evidence, and testimony from former users as to the physical, emotional, and mental costs of using steroids, but it doesn't really seem to deter anyone. I don't understand people who would literally risk their lives to win a trophy; after all, there are very few whose livelihood depends on their ability to win a powerlifting meet.

BG: Does drug testing work?

BO: Drug testing as it is now is a beginning. I firmly believe that random testing during the off season is the only way to stop steroid use. I also believe that blood testing is probably the most accurate. If ADFPA officials sent

a notice to each lifter, in whatever city they chose to visit, telling them "next week we'll be in town, show up to be tested", that would be a real deterrent. Anyone refusing to show up would not be allowed to compete in the Nationals.

BG: Do you follow any special diet?

BO: I don't really follow any special diet. I really enjoy cooking and try to stay with a good low fat diet. I recently found "Cooking Light" magazine and it has some wonderful recipes with the nutritional breakdown for each one. I don't take any supplements or vitamins, they usually make me nauseous.

BG: What type of training program do you follow?

BO: My training program? With my work schedule, working 24 hours and then off for 48 hours, I don't really follow any set plan. Sometimes if we have had a busy night and I'm really tired, I'll change my original plan and do something light. I also run the mornings I get off work so I try not to do heavy legs that day. I use Scalpi's deadlift routine for squats and benches I usually train according to what my body feels like. I have tried different routines printed in PL USA occasionally and get some fresh ideas. Unfortunately, not having a training partner it's sometimes easy to wimp out on a workout. I do use a 10 week training cycle before a meet and find that keeps me from peaking too early or too late.

BG: Do you have any advice for beginners?

BO: My advice for beginners is to learn the correct form. If your form is good your injuries will be fewer! Try to find someone in the gym that knows what they are doing and ask for help. The management usually knows who's who in their gym. Ask them to point you in the direction of a good lifter. Remember, if it is worth doing, it is worth doing right.

BG: How is powerlifting viewed?

BO: The general public really doesn't have any idea what powerlifting is. I am often asked if it is "the one on TV where you pick up the weight over your head." I have also had people ask me if I use steroids just because I move more weight than any women they currently know. If only they could meet some of our light weight women; now those girls are really strong. If we could get more coverage in muscle magazines, publications found in the magazine section of your local grocery store, then powerlifting would not be such a mystery to everyone.

BG: Are there any other comments you would like to make?

BO: I would really like to thank my husband Dann for his never ending support. Also, a special thanks to Randy Widmaier, my chiropractor, for putting the pieces back together all the time. Thanks also to Pete and his group at Titan Support Systems, a wonderful bunch of people who have created a great lifting suit.