

INTERVIEW

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

ANDRZEJ STANASZEK The GIANT of Polish Powerlifting as interviewed for PL USA by Stephan Korte

Introduction: I first met Andrzej Stanaszek at the Junior European Championships in Budapest, Hungary in 1992. He was already dominating the light divisions in the junior categories at that time. I have to admit that I was really impressed to see him lifting such monstrous poundages. Over the last five years Andrzej has become one of the strongest powerlifters in the world, pound for pound. He has collected a prolific number of world and national titles, not to mention numerous world records. This interview was conducted at the German powerlifting finals.

SK: Before we get to the more detailed questions, let's get some of the specifics down, and your age, occupation, and any facts that you think are important.

AS: I was born in Bielsko Biata, Poland on September 25th, 1971. I am 4 feet tall and 110 pounds. At present, powerlifting is my job. I've been married to my wonderful wife Matgorzata for 2 years now.

SK: Being only 4 feet tall, you are a dwarf. Is anybody else in your family a dwarf?

AS: No, all of my family members and relatives are of average height. Sure, they are not 6 feet tall, but they are not dwarfs.

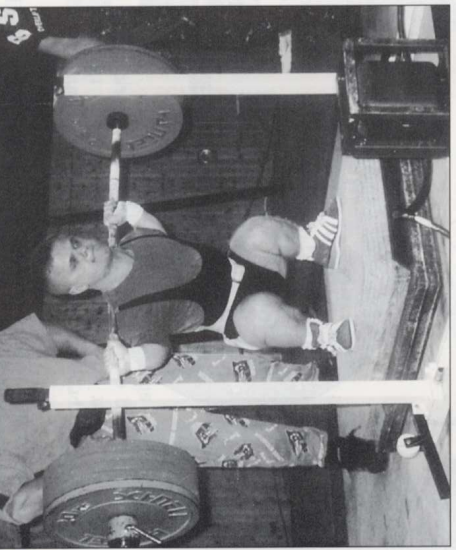
SK: Did you suffer from being a dwarf during your youth?

AS: To be honest with you, yes. I guess in Poland it is like everywhere in the world; if you look different than the average person, the others think you are strange. That's what I experienced. The kids at school treated me really bad. They were teasing me all the time. Now I get along with it, but I want to mention one thing: I am not into powerlifting to show the people who were treating me bad in the past that I'm stronger than they are. I like to compete and that's why I am into powerlifting.

SK: How did you get started and how many years have you been training and competing?

AS: I got involved in powerlifting by accident. I met a powerlifting coach at the train station in Bielsko Biata. This was in May of

I do technique training. I always squat first, followed by bench press and deadlift. I go by feeling. Sometimes I train heavy with low reps; sometimes I use lighter weights and go for more reps. The regular training session lasts about 3 hours. On Tuesday, I have my special deadlift day. The deadlift is my weakest lift, that's why I need to do some additional exercises to improve it. I do a lot of good mornings for my lower back and several exercises to strengthen my grip. Thursday is my assistance day for the bench press. I do partial reps using blocks, also train by feel, sometimes heavy, sometimes light. Every workout is completed by 15 minutes of stretching. This helps me to stay injury free. I do not train my shoulders because I believe I don't need to do it. For me, training biceps is no fun at all, that's why I don't waste any time with it.



Andrzej squatting 585 at the '96 German Team Finals. (photo by Stephan Korte)

1989. He asked me to meet him in the gym to try to lift weights. We met each other the next day and that's how everything started. My first competition was the IJF World Bench Press Championships in Russelsheim, Germany. I finished 4th in the 110 kg class.

SK: What did you look like and what was your bodyweight when you started lifting weights?

AS: I weighed 115 pounds, but I was fat. During my first year of training I cut back to 100 pounds and bulked up again to 110 pounds, this time with much more muscle.

SK: Tell us about your best lifts in training and competition?

AS: My best lifts in competition are: squat 595, bench press 391, deadlift 319 and a 1500 total, which I posted at the IJF World's in South Africa. The squat, bench and total were all world records at 114.

SK: What are the titles you have won so far?

AS: The titles and championships I have won are as follows: 4 time IJF Junior World Champion, 4 time EPF Junior European Champion, 7 time IJF Bench Press World Champion, 4 time EPF Senior European Champion and 4 time IJF Senior World Champion.

SK: Andrzej, what are your future goals in powerlifting?

AS: Actually, I don't have any goals. I have already reached more than I have imagined when I started lifting some years ago. I even beat Eddy Coan by relative points at the IJF World's in Finland. I just want to continue lifting, win the IJF World's a few more times and stay healthy. A 660 squat at 110 might be a goal to shoot for. I know I can do it.

SK: Tell us about your training program, both in and out of season.

AS: I make no difference between training in and out of season. I always work out 5 times a week, Monday through Friday. I train with my coach, who is my wife. She really motivates me. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

and enough sleep I get 8 hours of rest. On Tuesday, I have my special deadlift day. The deadlift is my weakest lift, that's why I need to do some additional exercises to improve it. I do a lot of good mornings for my lower back and several exercises to strengthen my grip. Thursday is my assistance day for the bench press. I do partial reps using blocks, also train by feel, sometimes heavy, sometimes light. Every workout is completed by 15 minutes of stretching. This helps me to stay injury free. I do not train my shoulders because I believe I don't need to do it. For me, training biceps is no fun at all, that's why I don't waste any time with it.

SK: What kind of equipment do you use in training?

AS: Talking about the regular powerlifting equipment, I just use a belt. In training, I always wear 2 pairs of pants and 4 t-shirts. That keeps my muscles warm and helps to prevent injuries. I haven't tried a tight suit or some equipment from Pete Alaniz of Titan Support Systems, but it's a hell of a lot of stress to put it on. That's why I don't like to wear it.

SK: Do you use any special supplement program or follow any special diet?

AS: I do not use any supplements at all. I've once tried a vitamin B supplement and got a bad allergy. That's why I decided to stay away from any kind of supplements. As far as nutrition goes, I eat a lot of rice, chicken, vegetables, fruits and salad. I have 3 meals a day and a few little snacks in between.

SK: Are there any other aspects besides training and nutrition which you consider to be important for successful lifting? Do you use any mental training techniques like visualization or hypnosis?

AS: I believe that good nutrition and enough sleep if get 8 hours



Opening with 341 at 114 lbs. bodyweight - without benefit of a bench press shirt!

every night and a 2 hour nap during the day are the most important aspects to lift heavy. I have no special mental preparation when I lift. I concentrate on the weight and the lift. Power comes from inside and I am a quiet lifter. Screaming, yelling and head-banging are not necessary for heavy lifting.

SK: Who are your heroes, or those you admire in powerlifting?

AS: Hideaki Inaba, Ed Coan and Kirk Karowski. They were my idols when I started lifting and I still look up to them because they are strictly world class athletes. They always give 110 percent when they lift.

SK: What keeps you motivated to continue lifting heavy?

AS: Powerlifting is my job and my philosophy is to give 100 percent every time I work out. I am sponsored by the Polish Powerlifting Federation for placing in the top three at the IJF World's. I need the money and that keeps me motivated, too.

SK: Andrzej, could you share with us your views on steroid use and drug testing?

AS: Using drugs destroys the honesty of athletic competition. They destroy the health that sports can give you.

SK: What is your opinion about the ADPFA (now the USAPL)?

AS: I have no idea about their drug testing program. We once had a drug free federation in Poland, but that was a joke. You had to sign a statement that you were drug free and that was all. It was a real pain in the ass; everybody was using drugs. In my opinion, they have to test at least the top three of each weight class by

be weak. I don't want to rely on equipment.

SK: My friend Michael Soong said that you would beat Ed Coan by relative points in his All-Time World Record List total at 114, how do you like that idea?

AS: I've already beaten Ed Coan at the World's in Finland in 1995. That's enough satisfaction for now.

SK: But Ed was injured at that competition.

AS: You know what? He looked real good and he also hit some big numbers in that meet. I guess he just had an off day. I wasn't in top shape either, but I beat him anyway.

SK: Some lifters say that dwarfs, because of their leverage, have an unfair advantage for powerlifting. What do you think about that?

AS: I invite these lifters to get off all their equipment and lift against me - raw! I promise, there will be no chance for anyone of them to beat me.

SK: After years of communism, how is the situation in Poland nowadays?

AS: It's pretty good now. Getting good food is no problem anymore. The only problem is the financial situation. As a powerlifter, I make

only \$200 a month, but the prices are the same as in the western countries. Powerlifting is not supported by the Polish government, Federation. I get \$1000 for an IJF or EPF title.

SK: Which are your next competitions? Do you plan anything spectacular in the near future?

AS: This year I will compete at the European Championships in May, the European Bench Press Championships in August, the IJF World's in November and the IJF Bench Press World's in December. I don't plan anything spectacular - just to win.

SK: How do you like the German powerlifting Bundesliga?

AS: It's always a pleasure for me to compete in the Bundesliga. The competitions are very well organized, the comradeship is great and lifting is a lot of fun.

SK: What are your interests outside of powerlifting?

AS: I don't really have any hobbies. I like to be around my family and spend most of the time with my wife.

SK: Are there any final comments you'd like to make?

AS: Yes. I would like to thank Mike Lambert for his interest about me and for publishing this interview. Thanks to the powerlifting team of Bavaria Landshut for inviting me to the Bundesliga. I would also like to thank my wife who has given me love and support during the last five years. Last, but not least, greetings to all the readers of Powerlifting USA. Follow your dream and it will come true.



Andrzej and his wife Matgorzata enjoy a copy of POWERLIFTING USA magazine