

Nick Winters is one of the strongest bench pressers on the planet. His elite strength status is not yet matched with the same kind of name recognition that men like Ed Coan or Louie Simmons enjoy. One of the purposes of this interview is to help rectify that imbalance.

**ALN:** You are a truly elite powerlifter in terms of your pressing power but not nearly as well known as some of your peers. Let's start off by you telling us a bit about yourself.

**NW:** I am your average 24 yr. old guy. I split my time between work, the gym, and my girlfriend. I have been lifting since I was 11 and powerlifting since I was 22. I am from North Manchester, IN. My father got me started in lifting. He taught me all the basics and we both learned as we went along. I have a degree from Manchester College. I currently reside in Crown Point, IN.

**ALN:** I don't think the word average suits you very well Nick, but I get your point. What was it that sparked your interest in powerlifting at 22?

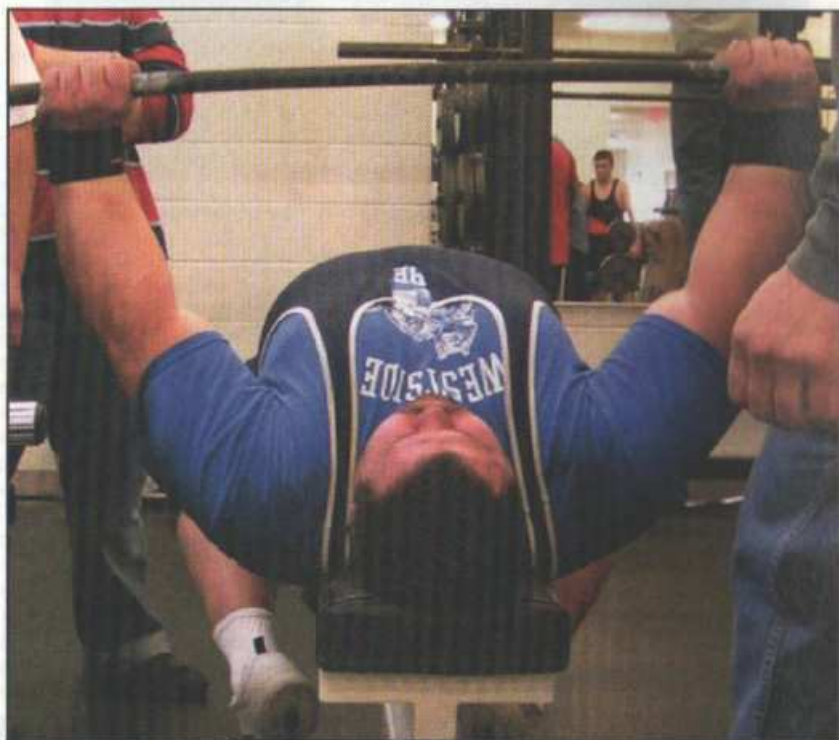
**NW:** I really loved lifting heavy and hated dieting, so I decided to look up some bench records. I discovered that I could easily beat most of the records in my age and weight class so I decided to go for it. I did well from the beginning and loved the type of training I was doing so I decided to stick with it.

**ALN:** Nick, you are best known right now for your raw pressing. Why have you chosen to concentrate on raw benching?

**NW:** There are 2 primary reasons. First, it just feels right to me. I don't have to face some of the common problems of equipped lifting like missing a lift because I got slightly out of the groove or being concerned about not being able to touch my chest with the bar. I also have the satisfaction of knowing that I pressed the weight not some mechanical force produced by the material of a bench shirt. That said, I want to clarify that I have all the respect in the world for shirted benching and plan on making my presence known in that arena in the near future. In fact, I plan to do shirted lifting while seeking the raw bench record because I find a high correlation between the increase in my shirted and raw presses. The other reason I have been limited in how much shirted work I do is because up to this point I have not had the luxury of enough people to work with me and spot me while training with the extreme loads the shirts allow for. I will be doing a lot of my training at Quads Gym in Calumet City now

# INTERVIEW

## NICK WINTERS as interviewed by Chris Mason of At Large Nutrition



Nick Winters benching in recent APA competition. (Scott Taylor photograph)

so that shouldn't be as much of a problem anymore.

**ALN:** What are both your short and long term goals relative to the sport of powerlifting?

**NW:** In the short term I want the raw bench press record! My long term goal is to become a highly proficient shirted bencher and get that record as well.

**ALN:** The bench press has got to be the best known resistance movement in the world. You are truly a top-tier raw bencher and I am sure our readers would love to know how you train. Please give us a breakdown of your weekly training schedule to include sets and reps.

**NW:** My bench routine is as follows:

**Mondays:** are Maximum Effort (ME) days. I begin with 225 lbs for a set of 5 and continue with 5 rep sets adding 90 lbs per set until I hit 405 lbs. I then jump to 515 lbs for another set of 5. Next, I move to 600 lbs and work with singles until I hit my max for that day.

**Wednesdays:** are my Dynamic Effort (DE) days. I use 9 sets of 3 reps with 405 lbs and doubled purple bands. I then start my

triceps training:

\*\*\* When reading below "3 x 8-10 reps" indicates 3 sets of post-warm-up working sets using 8-10 reps per set. I will either keep the load the same for each working set or progressively increase the load depending upon how I feel that day.

Close grip bench press 3 x 5-8

Tate presses 3 x 10-12

Decline skull-crushers 4 x 8-10

Triceps pushdowns 3 x 10-15

\*\*\* Tate presses are performed

lying on a bench with 2 dumbbells. Begin the movement with the dumbbells resting on-end on your chest. Your palms should be facing towards your feet. The base of the dumbbells should be touching each other as they rest on your chest. Your elbows are flared out at a 90 degree angle to your torso (straight out to the side). Rotate only at the elbows and straighten your arms. Lower and repeat. You can go to the following page on the web for a pictorial description: <http://www.weightliftingdiscussion.com/tatetri.html>

**ALN:** That is some serious stuff Nick! What do you do for the rest of

your body?

**NW:** I do the following by body part:

Tuesday: is my heavy back day.

Bent-over rows 3 x 8-10 reps

Hammer Strength high-row 3 x 8-10 reps

Hammer Strength low-row 3 x 8-10 reps

Heavy rack pulls 3 x 5-8 reps

Thursday: is my heavy shoulder day.

Arnold presses or standard dumbbell presses 3 x 8-10 reps

Upright rows 3 x 10-12 reps

Bradford presses 4 x 8-12

reps

Rear delt flyes 3 x 10 reps

\*\*\* A quick note on the Bradford press. This is an overhead press where you alternate pressing to the front and behind the head (one rep to the front followed by a rep to the back). I lower the bar to just above my head when doing this style of press.

On Fridays I do a "light" back day which utilizes the same exercises and number of sets as Tuesday, but with higher reps. Saturdays are speed bench and light triceps.

I like variety in my routine so I will either change the assistance exercises or the order in which they are executed from week to week. The set totals and rep counts are kept constant.

**ALN:** You do quite a bit of heavy pressing in addition to all of the benching you do. I have been told that big Gene Rychlak avoids any additional heavy front delt work and I know for

a fact Mike Wolfe does the same. How do you feel the extra work benefits you?

**NW:** Shoulder strength is a huge component of benching and my recovery is such that I can train them intensely and benefit from said training. Shoulder presses also provide another opportunity for heavy indirect triceps work.

**ALN:** You are a huge guy Nick and I am sure plenty of our readers would love to pack on the mass. Diet plays a big role in this endeavor. Tell us about your diet.

**NW:** Not to make light of it, but I have to chuckle at the question as I don't actually have a set diet. I suppose it is a function of youth and heredity, but I eat whatever I want whenever I want it. I am cognizant of the fact that I need more protein than the average Joe and I try to consume plenty of it as well as plenty of carbs. That's about as specific as I get...

**ALN:** Well, God bless good genes! How about a staple food that you can't do without? Do you have one?

**NW:** Hamburger, I am always eating it in one form or another. I eat

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a lot of steak, hamburgers, hamburger helper, and whatever else my girlfriend is willing to cook for me.

**ALN:** Is there a particular benefit you ascribe to consuming a lot of beef or do you just love the taste?

**NW:** The benefit is its high protein content and caloric density. I need a lot of quality calories to maintain my size. Oh, and yes, I love the taste!

**ALN:** I know you recently suffered a partial tear of your pectoralis. To what do you attribute the injury and how have you rehabbed yourself?

**NW:** The injury was a result of my obsession to be the best and my concurrent overreaching with respect to volume and load. Bottom line, I was overtrained and that left me open to injury. That fact combined with a bad spot and there you have it.

My rehab consisted of rest, ice, stim, ultrasound, massage, and proper diet with respect to staying sufficiently hydrated and making it a point to consume extra protein. In addition, you were kind enough to offer me ETS (Extreme Training Support). This is no b.s.; I am truly amazed at how well the product worked. You had told me Kara Bohigian used it during her rehab from knee surgery but I was a bit skeptical with respect to what it could really do for me. With its use I was able to get back to heavy training much more quickly than I imagined possible.

**ALN:** What is "stim"?

**NW:** "Stim" is short for electric stimulation. Its use improves circulation in the treated area which offers a myriad of recovery benefits to include the removal of fluid.

**ALN:** Ok, got it. You're not kidding about getting back to heavy training very quickly! You competed in The Kings of the Bench meet (held at the expo for the Mr. Olympia contest in Las Vegas on September 29th) literally only a few weeks after the tear, correct?

**NW:** It was just under 6 weeks prior to the meet that I injured myself. With the ETS and rehab I was back up to 90% or so in time for the meet. I tied Brian Siders with a 625 lbs raw press but lost due to bodyweight. I gave 650 lbs a real nice ride twice, but it was just not quite there on that day. I don't like losing, but was happy to be able to compete so soon after the injury.

**ALN:** Are supplements part of your regular arsenal as well and if so which do you use?

**NW:** I am a firm believer in proper supplementation. I use several products to include your aforementioned ETS and also your protein product called Nitrean. I also like Designer Supplements' products



Nick Winters interviewed by Bill Kazmaier at the New England Record Breakers event. (BodyTech USA)

and am currently using Vigor, Glucophage XR, and Xceed.

**ALN:** It occurs to me that someone like you is in a very interesting position. You are one of the best benchers in the world and that gives you a tremendous ability to influence others. I remember when I was young and just getting into training and reading about how the biggest and strongest trained was always a tremendous thrill! I can vividly remember the anticipation when I got a new magazine or book. It was like Christmas! I knew that in the magazine or book was some new way that a champion trained which would help me to achieve my goals!

Now you are the guy that young men will look to for the secrets to training success! Let me ask you, what would you say to that young man who ever so desperately wants to bench 3 plates and is reading this interview right now?

**NW:** This will be a bit of a case of "do as I say not as I do". You must train intelligently. You cannot push your body to its limits every time. You should also eat in such a way that it facilitates optimal recovery. This includes making sure to get plenty of quality protein every day and not skimping on the carbs.

Your training focus for a big bench must include plenty of bench work but the real "secret" to a big bench revolves around plenty of hard work for your triceps, lats, and shoulders. This assistance work is what will take you to the next level in benching.

Finally, form is the key to a big bench. Learning proper form has enabled me to reach heights I would have never thought possible.

**ALN:** Tell us more about proper form for the bench. What have you done to your own form that has reaped you the greatest benefit?

**NW:** I have done several things which in totality have greatly enhanced my bench:

1) I needed to find a way to position my feet so that I would not lift my butt when pressing. I accomplished this by placing my feet as far back as possible. I put my weight on the balls of my feet and turn my heels inwards. I am not recommending this particular style for everyone but it has certainly worked for me.

2) Louie Simmons and the guys at Westside taught me the importance of triceps in benching. Prior to Westside I was essentially trying to use the momentum I could generate with my pecs and delts to power the weight to lockout. I now know that to maximize my bench I must focus on my triceps so that I have the power to lockout the loads I can press off my chest. This may sound obvious but I can tell you that there are a myriad of benchers who don't realize the true value of triceps strength in benching.

3) I learned to lift my head and watch the bar. This helps to protect the neck and also shortens your stroke just a touch.

4) I started pushing out my abdomen while lowering the bar

which again helps to shorten the ROM.

5) Westside taught me to press the bar in a straight line.

6) Finally, I was taught to hold my breath during a maximum lift. This increases pressure in the whole thoracic cavity thus creating a sturdier base for the press and increasing the absolute load you can bench.

When I went to Westside I basically learned to bench all over again. Prior to my making that move I really had no idea what I was doing with respect to the technical aspects of powerlifting. To anyone reading this I would suggest you check out their videos as they will truly teach you how to become the best benchner you can be. You can get the videos at [www.westside-barbell.com](http://www.westside-barbell.com) and I also know that AtLarge Nutrition ([www.atlargenutrition.com](http://www.atlargenutrition.com)) is going to be running a promotion where you can get a FREE Westside video with your purchase of AtLarge's products. You can't beat that! Great supplements and great videos! All you need to become the next big thing in benching!

**ALN:** Yep, the Westside videos are awesome to be sure! Good stuff and thanks for sharing with our readers.

Nick, I wish you the best of luck in becoming the greatest raw and shirted presser in the history of strength sports and I am confident you have what it takes to do just that. Thanks for the interview and we will be seeing you in the record books soon!