



Liz Willet

Against The World

MM: Tell us about you.

Liz: I am 33 years old and I have been lifting for about seven years now. I train at Bellingham Health and Fitness, in Bellingham, WA or where the weight is heavy and the company is good!

MM: What got you started in powerlifting?

Liz: Hank Sowar and Patrick Fern were my first training partners. They were the first to notice me. I was working at the airport throwing boxes when they invited me to lift with them. That was all she wrote... On my first training day I remember doing a deadlift pyramid up and back to 315 lbs. I was hooked after that!

MM: Have you always lifted in the USAPL and IPF?

Liz: Until recently, yes. My very first meets were in the 1990's with the ADFPA. It is all I ever knew.

MM: What do you consider your best accomplishments to date? What are your short-term goals and long-term goals?

Liz: Using a monolift and not walking out with 705 lbs. at the Arnold Classic, lol. That was tough mentally and high. I would have to say my best accomplishment to date would be the Arnold WPO and totally embarrassing myself at the Olympic contest. They say do something every day that scares you. Well, I am good for a few years... My short-term goal is to hold a membership to every federation. In the long-term I want to try it all... But, mostly just be able to lift - on any platform I choose. God willing I have the strength to keep doing it!

MM: What is your most memorable event?

Liz: A few years back I was invited to a Girl Scout sleepover - did not think anything of it. I planned on saying hello, maybe talk about the sport, and do a few demos. Boy

was I wrong. There was over 500 girl scouts, from age's seven to twelve, holding hands in the middle of the stadium with me in the middle, talking about strength and powerlifting with a bullhorn. Lots of talk about how girls rule and boys drool... but I think it was one of the neatest things that I have ever experienced. I would not have had that moment without this sport.

MM: So what do you do when you are not on the platform? Do you have any hobbies?

Liz: Well, I love my kid, animals, music and plants. Sounds crazy but I have a new house and really love to be there. Can you call living a normal life a hobby? I am a bit of a collector - mostly trades I have made at powerlifting competitions with friends over the years.

MM: What do you do for a living? You have certainly done a lot of traveling to compete in the IPF. How are you able to manage this?

Liz: I am working two jobs right now but I feel that I have been very blessed with them. I work as a detention officer in our county juvenile facility. I also work as a security officer for our local refinery. With the twelve hour shifts it is getting easier to schedule powerlifting events. Both employers are both very supportive of my endeavors.

MM: You have recently been the subject of many internet forum conversations. In short, you were invited to compete at the Arnold Classic as a guest lifter.

Afterwards you were uninvited to the IPF World Games. The IPF cited your involvement with the Arnold Classic as a violation of their rules. However, other IPF lifters competed in the same competition, as have in the past, and were not penalized. What was the result of this?

Liz: Politics, politics, politics... You really want to read more of it? Well after all the scandal, I have been reinstated and hope the problems will be assessed and corrected. It's really too late for me to

further prepare, but I have my spot and thanks to my supporters, I will be able to go.

MM: I read somewhere on the internet, someone arguing that the IPF felt you were "snubbing" them by not attending the Women's Worlds, and therefore had the right to replace you on the team. Weren't you already qualified for the World Games? What is your response to comments like this?

Liz: I followed the rules and qualified for the team. I did what everyone else did. It was not a rule that I had to attend Nationals. I chose to only do one international trip. People can take it as personal as they want. All the reasons posted for my suspension never added up. I don't think but a few people in the USAPL felt snubbed. Most people could care less. People are going to be passionate about what they want to believe. It's okay. Life is too short.

MM: You lifted at the Arnold Classic this year as a guest lifter? What made you decide to compete at that event? How did you perform there?

Liz: Holy Smokes! What made me compete? I got invited. What an honor! I can't even remember how I performed except for the monolift. I remember thinking 705 lbs. felt light. I remember Kara Bohigan and Becca Swanson being the first to offer their help. I remember six thousand people in the audience that LOVE powerlifting. The lights, the music, Kirk totally yelling at me like in the good old days, the best gear man, Wade and more strong men in one venue than you could ever ask for... Wow. I also met Phil Phister and Magnus! I finished and made some new friends. The entire experience was fantastic.

MM: You have always seemed very loyal to the USAPL. You even wore a I-Shirt at the Arnold Classic identifying yourself as a USAPL sponsored lifter. Care to comment?

Liz: Yep, my T-Shirt was from the Bullseye Barbell Club. I went to the WPO with every intention of representing the USAPL as a guest lifter. The bullseye on the shirt obviously did not work.

MM: The IPF has a rule that a lifter cannot lift in the same competition as a banned lifter, yet we see this occurring very frequently without consequence. Do you feel this rule is unfair since it was the reason for your exclusion from the World Games?

Liz: It is not a fair rule when used selectively. I only think it was this rule that was used because there was nothing else to base my suspension on. It has been misused many times against other lifters and either has to stop or be rewritten. I don't need to rehash my feelings regarding my particular situation. If you are going to use a rule it has to be universal for everyone who drops the \$40 entry fee.

MM: What did the USAPL do as result of the IPF's decision? What support did they offer you in this matter?

Liz: They did nothing, except recommend my suspension. Nothing. They never notified me, or even answered when I tried to go through the process. It was not until I went to the IPF. Once they became involved, then there was a reaction.

Now I don't want to group the USAPL as a whole, they have lots of members that have been very supportive. It's just hard to be outspoken when your platform is threatened. It's a hard deal no matter what.

MM: Some people say that there is too much politics in powerlifting. Would you agree?

Liz: Yes, but it is a double-edged sword. Powerlifting needs politics, especially if we are going to move toward making powerlifting a premier sport that is going to get noticed. I think we need fewer agendas for personal gain.

MM: Do you think that powerlifting will ever reach Olympic stature?

Liz: I don't know why no one talks about the truth on this one. It is almost hush-hush. The rule says to even be "considered" into the Olympics, the sport has to have half of the nation's athletes involved. The only direction that is the right one is unification. There has to be a medium that everyone can agree on.

MM: Will you continue to lift in the USAPL/IPF in the future? Do you have plans to lift in any other organizations?

Liz: Well, never say never... I think it depends on the actions of the federation. I am hurt right now. I have never been treated this badly regarding my hobby for goodness sake. I believe there are still people in the federation that can come back to the mission statement and make it grow again. Do I plan on lifting in other organizations? Yep! I am planning to lift at the Unified Nationals, Bench America and the Arnold Classic - as long as the invitations are open. I will never miss another experience again as long as I can lift. Also, I really want to be invited to Strongwoman contests!

Liz: How can anyone call getting under that weight, the physical strength, mental toughness, and personal triumphs that result, illegitimate? Honestly, I have always wondered if I was good enough to compete on other platforms. To this day if I see someone doing a PR, absolutely loving what they do, I still get goose bumps. Who cares about the federation? It's about lifting the steel, period.

MM: Do you think it is fair that the only way to qualify for the IPF is through the USAPL?

Liz: I think that right now, it's the rule. I think that the USA has to come up with a good reason for the IPF to pay attention. If we ever unify, I don't think it will matter what you call it.



MM: What do you feel has contributed most to your success in powerlifting?

Liz: The people I have met along the way have contributed most to my success. It's not really about the brass ring for me. Sure I like to win but it is about being able to be around folks that understand what we crazies do. A few years ago, if I said I was going to travel the world, meet exotic people, accomplish feats of strength most can't comprehend, I would have been laughed out of the room. It's the people who say, "Go for it! You can do it!" that are the biggest contribution. Thanks for that.

MM: Do you have any sponsors currently?

Liz: Yes: I have been blessed with people who support: RFI, Inzer, Barleans, HOP, MM, Bodybuilding.com, and Quest Nutrition. But mostly it is the individuals who are there when I need it the most - Mom and Dad. I still hope to get the attention of MXP, GNC, Altoids, or something like the boys do, but I am so thankful for everyone who has supported and believed in me. Thank you. I can't say it enough.

MM: Give us a run down on your typical training routine.

Liz: Since the Arnold Classic, I have literally not lifted for about three months except a few times here and there. This has been a first for me. Usually I train 4-5 times a week working the big three on a 5x5 raw percentage. Jackals Gym - their programs rock. Usually I take one day to do all three lifts, and one day for assistance and some cardio. It will be fun to see what I can do in a bench shirt one day, lol!

MM: There are some lifters that lift in the USAPL that feel that it is the only legitimate federation, and are quick to dismiss anything else. Have you ever felt this way? What are your feelings on the different federations?

MM: Is there anyone you would like to thank?

Liz: I would like to thank you for the interview. Of course I would like to thank my family and Stevie. Also, my training partners: Kevin, Dean, Ryan, Darin, Todd and Gilly. I could never ask for better people. I can't forget my employers, RSSI and Whatcom County. I would also like to thank the Lord for giving me the gift of strength and choosing this road for me. There's not much better in the world.

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