

A LEGEND RETURNS

Steve Goggins and Ed Coan were recently inducted into the Powerlifting Hall of Fame (some would say far too late, but better late than never). By the time you read this, both men will have had partial or full hip replacements, and Steve actually “went under the knife” on February 3rd. The photos in this article are all older but trust me, Steve looks exactly like he did ten years ago, maybe even twenty! He pulled a raw 750 at the Olympia Powerlifting meet in September, 2014 and no one got photos! He was going to have a friend take some pictures for this interview but he was in so much pain that he couldn’t do it.



Interview by Jim Curley

How old are you and when did you start powerlifting?

I’m 51. I started lifting in high school for football strength, kind of on my own time. I heard about a powerlifting meet at the YMCA, so I entered it. I was in the eleventh grade and weighed about 180. I did a 350 squat, a 320 bench press and a 480 deadlift.

How tall are you and what’s your weight?

I’m 5’8” and weigh 240. I pulled 750 raw at the Olympia in September 2014, but my left hip is so bad I’m trying to schedule surgery to have it replaced. I go through the VA, but they say my body mass index (BMI) is off, so they won’t schedule it until I get down to 230 pounds. That BMI doesn’t take athletes into consideration but they won’t deviate from it. I can’t bend down – I can still pull but that’s about it.

You think it's from all the heavy squatting and deadlifting over the years?

It could be from a number of things, but I was in the 82nd Airborne and jumped out of airplanes a lot, so I think that's the main cause of it. I joined the Army for six years after high school and three of those six years were in the Airborne.

How many times do you think you hit the ground parachuting?

I know I had at least twenty jumps, maybe more, and a lot of them were at night with no moon. You couldn't see the ground and couldn't brace yourself at all, just hit the ground hard. No bracing or preparation at all.

Did you powerlift while you were in the military?

I was a military lifter and competed in the All Armed Forces team for years. Gene Bell and Ausby Alexander were teammates and we did a lot of meets together.

I remember seeing you doing a huge squat on the cover of PLUSA. How much was that squat and when was it?

It was 968 and in the 1990's. I've squatted 1,000 or more many times, usually in double ply. A multi ply suit back then was basically a polyester single ply squat suit with a panel sewn in the butt area to keep it from blowing out in the hole. A double ply suit back then was nowhere as good as today's single ply suits – not even close.

What are your all time best lifts in a meet, regardless of federation?

1102-600-881. I weighed 264 when I squatted 1102 and deadlifted 881

in the same meet, and I weighed 242 when I benched 600. That was in 2003, and the bench was single ply.

I'm a lousy squatter, always have been, but when I saw the first picture of you squatting 800 or so all sandwiched over, I thought, "here's a guy who squats like me but does it well!". You do tend to lean over and it looks painful.

I still think it's the strongest squat style out there today. Kimberly Walford squats the exact same way and she's got the USAPL record for her age and weight. When you use your back like that it gets stronger.

Are you strictly a conventional puller?

That's right. I've never even tried sumo. I was always told when I was young that sumo was cheating, so I never tried it.

What do you do for a living?

I'm a personal trainer through www.gogginsforce.com. I've been training people since I got out of the military. A lot of people get exposed to powerlifting through CrossFit and I'm getting some of those people. CrossFit exercises don't really help powerlifting and it causes a lot of injuries, but it exposes people to the three lifts and that's good for the growth of powerlifting in general.

How many people do you work with as far as training goes?

I've got 20 on the team and another 20 online. The online coaching is



growing and I am not at capacity yet. I just want to help people get better and if I ever get too busy I'll let people know. I teach the squat a different way and a lot of people are getting stronger from doing it.

Describe your squat method.

I start with the chin down and no arched back. What I'm looking for is a neutral spine. I don't like the "chin up, arched back" method. I was stronger when I wasn't arched. If you put your chin down and push through the upper back the bar comes up a lot faster.

If you get a new trainee and you're going to teach them to squat that way, what are your instructions and why?

I look at what they're doing right now. I want to make small, gradual changes in their form. The first thing I teach is how to walk out of the rack. Keep the hips tight and

activated with the bar low on the back. They've got to keep their hips tucked under them at all times. If the butt and hips are tucked under the body, it's much easier to hit depth.

So you don't like the "break at the hips and sit back" technique?

No, I don't like it. You sit way back on a box and you'll never get depth. Tuck the butt under, keep the hips tight and go straight down. Sit down and open the knees slightly. A few people can benefit from sitting back just ever so slightly, but most people tend to bend over some anyway, and sitting back will just magnify that; they'll never get deep enough. If you sit way back, then you've got to get this big arch and it just seems kind of backwards. Sit straight down, chin tucked, neutral spine – you should almost be able to hold a tennis ball under your chin.

Okay, so the lifter has descended with chin tucked, neutral spine and is in the hole. Now what?

Flare the upper back, almost like a cobra, and push that flared back to the wall behind. I tell lifters to act like a cobra and just raise up. The chin stays tucked the whole time.

Expound on squat depth.

Depth is breaking the hip below the top of the knee. Period. The lift should be done as it's always been done. There has to be a standard regardless of how many layers of gear are used. The lift is now conforming to the gear and it should be the other way around. Getting to correct depth in the squat is tough, but so what? Multi ply and high squats started happening around 2004 so lifters could say they were squatting more. Bench press had the same problem with lock outs. You

have to lock out the bench and show control, and this has gone away in some of the federations so that the lifter can lift more but not according to the classic standard. If the standard was universally followed for squat depth and bench lock out, even the raw and single ply lifters wouldn't have a problem with multi ply lifts.

Do you still bench?

Oh sure. I learned early to pull my shoulder blades together hard, arch, and then push your heels back to your traps. If you bench properly your lower body will be in pain from arching and pushing so hard. A lot of new lifters don't understand what you've got to do to have a big bench. You've got to have a short stroke and if you've got a big gut and can get a big arch you've got a short stroke. I've always wanted to look and feel athletic by weighing as little as possible while lifting as much as possible, so I'll never be a belly bencher. I've stayed around

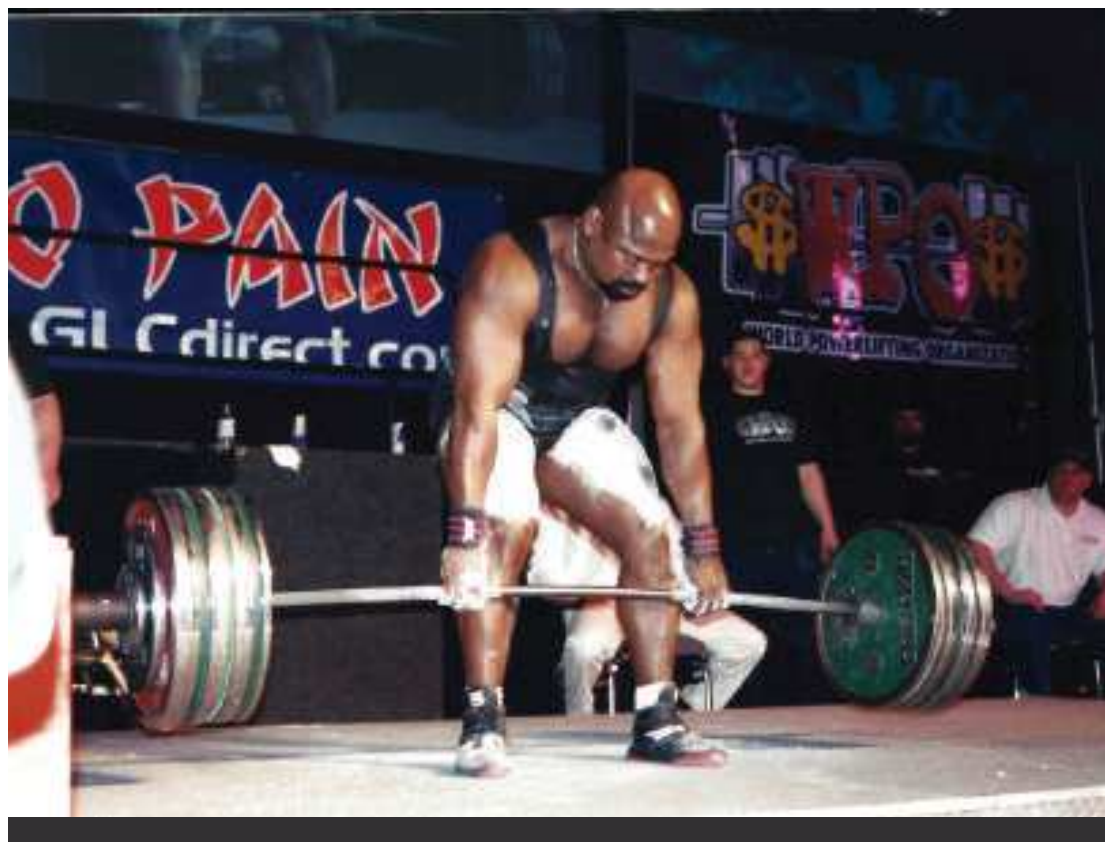
242 most of my life except when I squatted 1102 at 264.

Tell me about the deadlift. That 750 at the Olympia six months ago looked easy and you've got the leverage for it.

I was off a little because my hip was bothering me even then. I'm a high hip puller and I tell all my lifters we're going to find that high hip position and then start from there. If the hips come up after the lift is started, it'll be tough to finish. The hips shouldn't move.

Let's say a lifter has long legs and has trouble getting the shoulders and back behind the bar to start. What's your advice?

High hips are the most important thing. For some people it may look like the shoulders are over the bar, but I've seen a lot of lifters have great success even though their alignment may look not ideal. I think there can be some leeway if the hips



are right. Maybe that person's center of gravity doesn't cause a problem. You have to really work with an individual.

How long have you been a trainer?

I was a powerlifting coach for the Fort Hood Military Team while I was in the army back in 1988 – 1990. I was going to become a cop after I left the military, but I liked coaching so much I just stayed with it, and have done it ever since. I got certified through the Cooper Institute back then as a personal trainer. I'm also the USPA Georgia director, and I run 2-3 meets a year. I've been awarded the IPL World Deadlift and Benchpress Championships at the end of October, 2015.

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When is the hip replacement getting done?

It's a 6-12 month recovery, and I have to get it scheduled first and that's after I drop weight to 230. I'm looking forward to new PR's after I heal up.

What do you see as the future of powerlifting?

I don't think the sport will grow enough to be a public sport. I just don't think enough people care about it or are interested enough in it for it to be a big time televised event. It's just a thing that people go to the gym and do like they always have. The public doesn't see it as an actual sport, and it's boring to watch as a spectator. The audience will always be people already in the sport or their families. There just aren't enough fans. We live it and love it but we're the

minority. People who don't lift think, "why are you trying to lift more?" The public doesn't "get it" and they never will.

Do you think prize money could change that?

No, it doesn't make any difference. It spoils lifters to the point where medals and trophies are irrelevant. Every time I put on a meet I get people calling asking how much money is involved, and much of the time they're not even very good lifters! They're more interested in money than lifting. I hope the sport grows but I'm just not very optimistic that it will ever be much bigger than it is.

Who would you like to thank or mention?

Definitely my mother and father. Anyone who has helped me train, spot or load along the way. The list is just too long to mention everyone.

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Photos courtesy of Steve Colescott