

# INTERVIEW WITH POWERLIFTING LEGEND BILL KAZMAIER

Interview courtesy by Zhanna Ivanova



Height 6 ft 3 in (1.91 m)

Weight 320 lb (150 kg)

**B**ill Kazmaier (born December 30, 1953, in Burlington, Wisconsin) is a former powerlifter, strongman and professional wrestler from the United States. He is widely considered to be one of the all-time greatest competitors in strength competitions. During the 1970s and 80s, he set numerous powerlifting and strongman world records, and won two International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) world championships and three World's Strongest Man titles.

Kazmaier played American football at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1973-74, before leaving school to pursue powerlifting full-time.

## POWERLIFTING & STRONG MEN CAREER

In 1978, Kazmaier won the IPF world powerlifting championship and the American powerlifting championship. He won the IPF world championship again in 1983. In 1981, Kazmaier became the first person to bench press 300 kg in competition. The 1981 event was the same competition in which he totaled 1100 kg (2425 lb). His best lifts were: 420 kg (925 lbs) squat (done without a suit), 300 kg (662 lbs) bench press, and 402.5 kg (887 lbs) deadlift.

Kazmaier won the World's Strongest Man (WSM) title three times in 1980, 1981, and 1982.

## PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING CAREER

Kazmaier wrestled during the 1980's for promotions such as Stampede Wrestling and Continental Championship Wrestling.

His biggest national exposure came when he debuted for World Championship Wrestling in 1991 at Halloween Havoc. He received several shots at Lex Luger's WCW World Heavyweight Championship but failed to win the title. He also briefly teamed with Rick Steiner, only to lose to The Enforcers in a tournament final for the WCW World Tag Team Championship. While in WCW, Kazmaier also wrestled for New Japan Pro Wrestling.

## LIFE AFTER COMPETITION

After Kazmaier retired from strongman competition and pro wrestling, he opened a fitness club, Kaz Fitness Center, in Auburn, Alabama. The gym closed in 2005. Kazmaier then opened, and continues to operate, S.W.A.T. gym in Opelika, Alabama.

Kazmaier currently appears on ESPN as a co-commentator for the American broadcast of the annual World's Strongest Man competition along with Todd Harris and 2006 World's Strongest Man winner Phil Pfister. He also does some additional co-commentating in the British broadcast.



*“My stimulus and reason for living is really to help others.”*

### INTERVIEW

**- Powerlifting was a big part of your life, what did powerlifting give you in your life?**

My achievements within the sport gave me a platform to then go out into the community, to cities and schools, and share my experiences. I was able to encourage and motivate people and help them to become champions, winners. I encouraged people to overcome adversity, to strive through hard training and discipline and determination.

**- Who told you about this sport?**

Well, in the 5th grade I lifted my first weight, I took my bodyweight overhead at 10 years old with 110lb\50 kg, the man I did that in front of kicked me out from the gym and told me not come back. I had to find my own way and snuck into a YMCA and watch the guys do squat, deadlift and bench, and I learned very quickly and had great strength, so I really did not have any teachers. I trained and I followed the discipline of powerlifting, but I felt that there was something special going on and I feel this to this day. I have visited many schools in my time giving that message. That's my career in Powerlifting, my driving push all comes from the want, need and desire to help other people, because no one wanted to help me, but someone, the greatest power helped me, so now I want to help others so that history does not stay the same, that young people can go to a champion and learn. Yesterday standing right here were 20 young powerlifters and I gave them a seminar

for 30 minutes. I told them to go home tonight and think about what I said, talk to your coaches, talk among yourselves and use your computer to decide what you learn, what you know and what

also you want to know and come back tomorrow morning to ask questions and I will help you more.

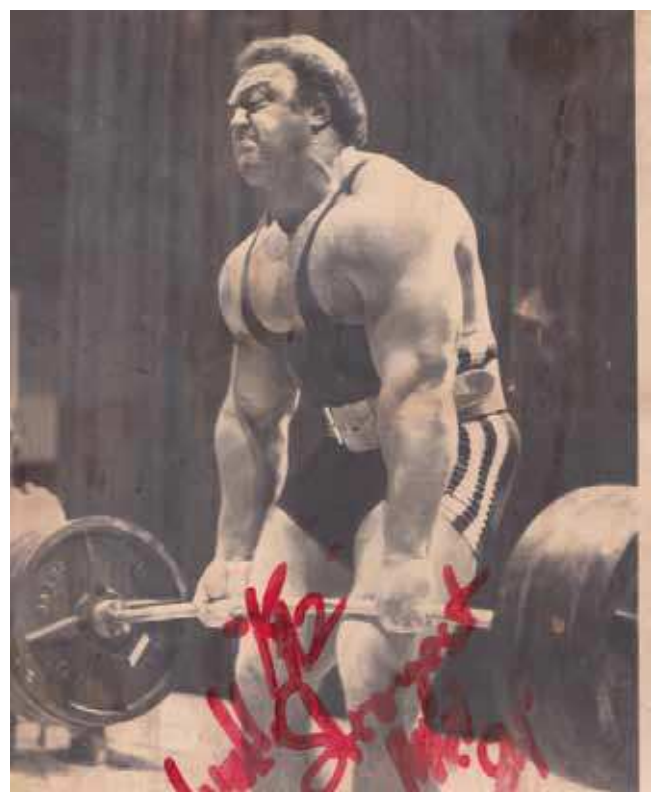
That's my greatest gift and that's my greatest reward, trophies, titles and world records means nothing to me. But to actually go into the eyes of a young person, down to the heart and put a thumb print on the soul and change their life for the better is like a million pound lift.

**- What are your thoughts about fear, the sort of fear that you feel sometimes before a competition? Because fear stops some people, but fear can also be a stimulant for people.**

A couple of times I have thought "fight or flight" as if one was a wounded animal in a corner being beaten, the animal comes out in a rage. But I found something much more pure than that, four letter word L-O-V-E. I would have love for my Lord, when I did again I got goose-bumps. I always said "I do this in celebration for my Lord" and I lifted very heavy weights, they were so easy, they were never hard, I never missed. I took weights that I knew I could make, even though they were world records.

**- What's the most strongest element of your character?**

Well, there's a balance of mind, body and spirit and those all works together. And I think I have those in a harmony and I was able to do that through my religion.



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- **Now, what is your stimulant to live? Do you want to teach young people, or something else maybe?**

My stimulus and reason for living is really to help others. Not only the worlds strongest men, but doing television with them is a lot of fun, being around Žydrūnas Savickas and being able to tell him he is the strongest strongman in the world, the greatest strong man ever. I was the greatest of my time, that's all I could be, that was 30 years ago, I would surely expect someone to be better now. Although yesterday when he lifted 1100lb he probably could have done it twice, 30 years ago I did 1055lb with 2 torn hamstrings, so I only used my back.

When I did the overhead press log world record my tricep had been ripped off and attached 4 months before. Eight weeks after the injury I was competing in a meet against everybody in a strongman competition in England, so I've got something special going on.

- **You took part in Highland Games, did you like it?**

I enjoyed the highland games and the bag pipes and the festive experience. My first time there I broke the world record in the 56 bar weight throw for height, again I had great pulling strength and the weight was easy to throw over the bar. So it was fun!

- **What is the secret of your training?**

That your perception of your reality is your

reality, if you think you are a champion and a winner - you are. When I walked onto the platform in a competition, that was my trophy, that was my title, that was my check and it was all mine. No one could touch me. Doing competitions with injuries, simply in my reality I was invincible, I couldn't be beaten. When others lifted weight that was so heavy for them I tossed the weight because to me it was empty, it was no weight, and I believed there was nothing. Heavy training is not hard, it just convinces you that you are stronger.



*“There’s a balance of mind, body and spirit and those all work together.”*

are, and they are happy and balanced in their life, healthy and live long and prosperous and that they constantly and positively affect their communities and other people where ever they go every day. That's my wish for them.

- **What do you think is the future for up and coming lifters, young lifters coming in?**

Well, the 20 young lifters that I'm going to talk to just now are not using suits or shirts or any of the heavy gear, that's the future of powerlifting.

- **Are you training now?**

Not so much, but I am playing a lot of golf!

- **Last question, your wishes to all powerlifters?**

My wish is that they always set a PR and being satisfied within. And when they look into the mirror that they are satisfied with whom they