

# INTERVIEW

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

## BILL GILLESPIE

as interviewed for Powerlifting USA by Brian Blum



**BB:** Could you provide us with some personal information about yourself?

**BG:** I'm married to my wife Anita. I have a son and a daughter, Camaron who is seven and Rachael who is four. I work as the assistant strength and conditioning coach at the University of Washington.

**BB:** How did you get started in powerlifting?

**BG:** I had a knee injury while playing football, and a friend at Liberty University by the name of John Hoffman asked me to come lift weights with him and Tom and John Paul. He got me lifting weights and powerlifting. I used to be a football player and I had to be in good shape to play football while at Liberty University.

**BB:** What are some of the contests you have been in, and what are your best lifts?

**BG:** I've been fortunate to be in the very first ADFPA National Championships and the first ADFPA Lifetime Drug Free Nationals. Those were very memorable meets. I won the first Lifetime Drug Free Nationals. The highest place finish in the Open Nationals I've ever had was second in San Jose to Bob Dempsey. My best lifts at 275 are 800 squat, 505 bench, and I think a 715 deadlift is my best deadlift, with a 1960 total.

**BB:** A coach's responsibility is to those being coached. Does coaching help your lifting?

**BG:** Yeah, it does help my lifting a lot. I am able to get the perspectives and insight from other lifters also able to use what I've learned

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a technique that allows you to lift more weight.

**BB:** Do you train your athletes in powerlifting movements?

**BG:** The bench press, of course, is very important. I insist that my athletes here keep the butt down. They are allowed to do a touch and go but with no bench shirts. In the squat they are only allowed to wear a belt, no knee wraps and no suit. The reason for that is because when they are on athletic fields they are not going to be wearing knee wraps or a suit, and I need to train the knees to be strong. We find the variations of movements helpful with the different personnel that we run up against. We use all variations of techniques to help them.

**BB:** How do you feel about special equipment such as the Monolift and bench shirts?

**BG:** I love the Monolift. I've actually never used it, but I know the man who invented it, and I would love to use it personally. As for the equipment is concerned, I personally wish that a lot of the equipment would be eliminated. I see it as a false indication of our strength. It is a little embarrassing working with the athletes here. When they see all the equipment I wear to lift the weight they think I'm cheating. I try to explain to them I'm not cheating, and they don't understand that, and if an athlete feels like it's cheating, then the general public is going to assume that it's cheating, that it's not natural. I think that if we're going to call ourselves strong, which we are and which we should be, then we should do it without the aid of all this equipment to do it.

**BB:** What are your views on drug use in powerlifting?

**BG:** For the sake of the lifters I wish the lifters would not take drugs. I am absolutely against a guy taking steroids to win a drug free meet. I wish he would just go by himself a trophy or make up a title. What's the difference? Why take away something from somebody else who's drug free? But for the guys who aren't drug free, feel sorry for them because I think that they are missing out on the journey to getting strong. Their focus is only on the goal and not the road that it takes to get there, and there are a lot of

rewards in life that can be achieved through that struggle of learning it drug free.

**BB:** How do you feel about the proliferation of powerlifting organizations in the US?

**BG:** I think that it is ruining powerlifting. Powerlifting is basically a minor sport with no hope of ever getting into the Olympics until it is unified. And with all the different national championships that are out there, it is kind of a joke to call yourself a national champion. It is embarrassing to try to explain it to somebody else.

**BB:** On the best ADFPA Top 20 twenty list for the 242 lb. class you ranked 10th in the squat, 19th in the bench, and 13th in the deadlift, but when you add them up you rank 5th in the total where it counts. Do you have a favorite lift, and how do you become a balanced lifter?

**BG:** My favorite lift is the deadlift, but I broke my back six years ago, and I've never been able to quite recover from that. As far as balanced training is concerned, I realize the total is what is going to win the competition. So I have to maximize every ounce from the different lifts. Sometimes I have to give up a little on my squat to try and get more out of my bench and deadlift. Because of the energy it takes to train one lift over

the other it is really hard to get all three lifts going well. I find I have to train the bench press more frequently than I do the squat and deadlift. I've had to come up with a plan that allows me to train the bench press more frequently than I do the squat or the deadlift.

**BB:** How do you train your lifts? **BG:** I came up with my own program. With almost everything I do I've come up with my own material. I use a lot of research from Louie Simmons. A lot of people consider Louie only being able to work with the guys that may not necessarily be drug free, but he is very intelligent about powerlifting and very helpful. The only thing Louie and I disagree on is how to train on the main three lifts. I feel as if you have to train them similar to what everybody else does. I still haven't been sold completely on the aspect of low reps, low intensity with short rest periods, but I can see where it would be more applicable to the athlete than it would be to the powerlifter. What I do in my own personal training is Monday I do heavy squat and light bench. Wednesday's heavy bench. Thursday is deadlift and assistance lifts for the deadlift. Friday is assistance lifts for the bench press. I

know that I train my bench press probably more frequently than most people with training it three times per week, but this has been the only way I've been able to make gains for my upper body. Most people can't handle that much training frequency, and they end up having shoulder problems. But I'm 35 years old, and I'm still making great gains.

**BB:** Do you follow a special diet? **BG:** I try to watch my fat intake and that's about all. I eat lots of complex carbohydrates, but I have not been sold on supplements. I've tried a zillion different supplements, and there aren't too many where I would just go out of my way and pay for them out of my own pocket. I've never really believed them.

**BB:** What are your future goals in powerlifting? **BG:** At 35 people keep telling me I've hit my peak, I'm going to stop getting better, and I'm going to have to back off my training. But I still have those same dreams I had when I was 21 year old. I want to be a national champion. I want to be a world champion. That may never become true, but I've got to try, and I've got to dream and hope that one day at one national championships all the rest of those great 275 pound-

ers won't show up, and I'll be the only one there and I'll be lucky enough to get to win. I think that's maybe the only way I'll ever win.

**BB:** I know the feeling. Are there any other comments you would like to make? **BG:** I would just like to thank my mentor Dave Williams at Liberty University for the years of patiently working with me to teach me about powerlifting and to teach me how to train someone intelligently, to teach me all about being a strength and conditioning coach and giving me a start in strength and conditioning. I would like to thank all the guys I've trained with throughout the years - Rick Samples, Earl Hammond - I hope I'm not forgetting somebody, I know I am. I would just like to thank the Paul brothers, and John Hoffman. Those guys have been there for me and I always appreciate them. My hero, the man I've always looked up to the most is John Kuc. He is called the father of drug free powerlifting. I've always admired and respected him, and he is a great drug free powerlifter. I would also like to thank you for doing this interview and giving me a chance to express my views in PL USA.



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