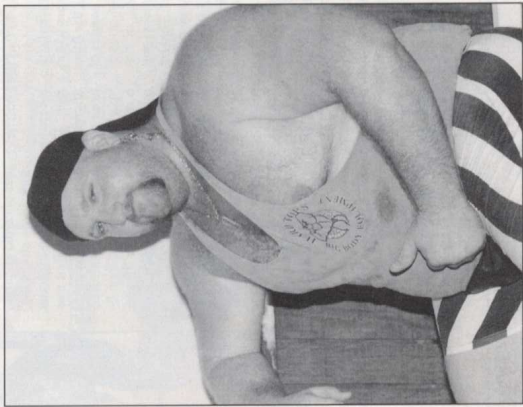


# Dr. JUDD

## JAMIE HARRIS - A candid conversation with America's In-flight Bench Press Superman on the plight of powerlifting, Arctidi, Clark, Elvis, professional wrestling, and his guarantee for future greatness in business and sports. Part II by Judd Biasiotto Ph.D.



Jamie Harris... getting over 800. (Chris Lydon photograph)

**Dr. Judd:** Not to change the subject, but I heard that you are the next coming of Elvis Presley. What is that all about?

**Harris:** You can only dream, but for now I am just an Elvis impersonator.

**Dr. Judd:** How did you get involved in that?

**Harris:** I have been a big fan of the King for a long time. In fact, I was reared on his music. When I was a little boy that is all I listened to. Now that I am an adult, it's still what I listen to. Let's be real, the man is an American legend. He possessed so many good traits, but he was also very enigmatic. He certainly marched to the beat of his own drummer. He also exuded power. He controlled just about every situation he was in. He was very powerful yet caring and spiritual. Another thing that always stood out in my mind is that he literally came from nothing and became a superstar, a genuine America personified.

**Dr. Judd:** I don't want to pander to your feelings, but I can see a parallel similarity there ...

**Harris:** Uh, thank you very much ... To me Elvis is his music, his life ... he is one of my greatest heroes. When I listen to his music, it just takes me to a different level. I remember listening to AMERICAN TRILOGY on my headset only minutes before I benched 740.

**Dr. Judd:** What about your impersonation of the King... what is that all about?

**Harris:** It is just what I told you. I am an Elvis impersonator. The name of my tribute show is called SHADOWS OF THE KING. I pay tribute to Elvis's later years, from '73-'77. I own three professional outfits made by BK Jump suits. These suits are worth about \$3000 a piece. The same people who designed the King's make them for me. I do everything from birthday parties to cash shows to theater productions. I have my own professional sound and light system along with my bodyguards. I've had meet directors approach me about doing shows at their meetings and if anyone is interested, they can email me at [outjez@aol.com](mailto:outjez@aol.com).

I don't want to brag, but I put on a pretty good show. I am a good bench presser, but I am a better Elvis impersonator. I try to make the pilgrimage to Graceland once a year during Elvis Week. In August of this year, I will compete in the 'Images of the King' contest in Memphis. If Elvis were a bench presser, he would have benched a 1000 pounds. What do you think, Judd?

**Dr. Judd:** Speaking of great bench presses, if we were going to rate the all time greatest bench pressers, I would definitely have Arctidi, Clark, Henderson, Contessor, and McDonald on there somewhere, and you would probably be there too, but that is my ranking order, and I will give you a break, you don't have to include yourself.

**Harris:** I can do that. Let me start, though, by saying that there have been many great bench pressers over the years. Of course, numbers are probably one of the best indicators of who are the best lifters. However, I feel that longevity, consistency, and the ability to come back from injury are also essential gauges of greatness. I am not a big fan of guys who lift in questionable meets, hit big numbers once or twice, and then disappear from the sport. Here is something else you have to understand: Anthony Arctidi, Lain and myself raised the bar, thereby making the 800 pound lift conceptually possible. When Arctidi benched 738, everyone thought that record would never be broken. Then I benched 740. After that we pushed each other into the high 700s. Check out the number of times Anthony and I have benched over 700 pounds. We did it more than 20 times, each in legitimate meets. It's a lot harder doing weights that no one else has ever come close to lifting. Imagine playing on a level where no one else has ever existed. Do you think I didn't exist to get to 800? Do you think Arctidi would have come out of retirement if Ken Lain had not surpassed his record? Hell no!! Everyone has to have something to push them. Now everyone is just reaping the benefits of the past, which is a good thing, but it's a lot harder to lead the pack to begin with.

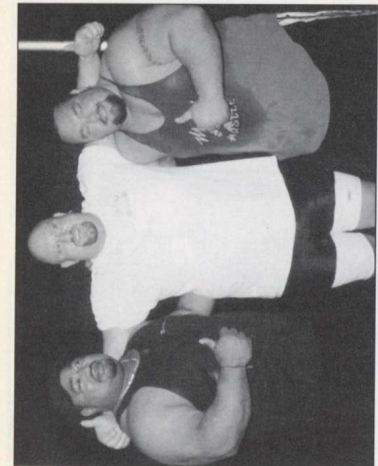
**Dr. Judd:** With that being said, would you please give me the list?

**Harris:** First, I will list them and then explain why. These are my top 10 best bench pressers of all time, in no particular order. Arctidi, Clark, Harris, Lain, Crawford, Halbert, Chris Confessore, Jesse Kellum, Tamara Grimwood, Jim Williams, and Pat Casey.

**Dr. Judd:** Jamie, I love the way you stack 11 guys on your all time top ten!

**Harris:** Is that eleven? Okay, well, then it is my all time top eleven. How is that?

**Dr. Judd:** Fine! Now, tell me why. Harris: Arctidi is on the list because he was the first man officially to hit 700. I also think he was the greatest show bench of all time. Ken Lain beat Arctidi's record and consistently put up big



At the 2001 Mountaineer Open... (left to right) Anthony Clark, Jamie Harris, Clay Brandenburg. (photograph was taken by Michelle Harris)

numbers; that is the reason he is way ahead of his time. He also had numerous records in several weight classes. He has to be considered one of the greatest. Jim Williams benched 675 in 1972 without a shirt. Talk about being ahead of your time ... he may be the best bench presser of all time from that standpoint. Tamara Grimwood was the first woman to bench 400. I still can't believe that she is gone. God bless her soul. Jesse Kellum, a great full meter lifter, has been around forever, and is now approaching 700 at 198, incredibly! Halbert, another veteran, is found for round the greatest!! 733 at 215!! Super nice guys, too! Clark, my archrival, he benched 700 many times. He is a seasoned lifter and by far one of the greatest of all time. Pat Casey was the first man to break 600. I think that speaks for itself. Crawford, my good friend and protégé, and the inventor of the open back shirt, and benched an incredible 750 at 275. Obviously, he is one of, if not, the greatest innovators in the history of the sport. Last, but certainly not least, Jamie Harris that's me, need I say more? Everyone on my list has established new boundaries and has proven themselves in my eyes. And here is a side note, virtually none - if any - of these lifters trained with the so-called "only way" system.

**Dr. Judd:** You call opening up the back of your shirt and wrapping it around your body an innovation? I call it something else ...

**Harris:** Hell yes it's an innovation! You do whatever it takes to gain an advantage in sports as long as it's not against the rules. I don't worry about it. Where do you go from here? Are you planning to

return to the sport?

**Harris:** Right now, my life is very busy and full. I work full time as a child behavior modification specialist at Shuman Center. My Elvis tribute show takes up my week-ends. I love doing these shows, and I plan to keep doing them for as long as I can. All my lifting buddies go to the show. My lifting time is wild, and we have a great time doing it. Keith McNeish, who has become one of my closest friends, has kept me pretty active in powerlifting. Keith is the Pennsylvania State APTF chairman. Over the last year or so, we have put together some pretty impressive meets. In our last meet, Ben White benched 700, and a number of other guys cracked the 600 pound mark. I don't think you are going to see that kind of lifting every time meet promoters. Consistently, in putting most of my energies in that direction, we have top sponsors such as Rick Brewer of The House of Pain, Ricky Dale Crain, and Butch Polstrom of BK Jumpsuits. Of course, we are still looking for more sponsors. Before we finish, we are going to put together some of the biggest and best meets in the world. If anyone is interested in getting some great advertisement or if they are interested in booking my Elvis impersonation ... Shadow of the King, you should email me at [outjez@aol.com](mailto:outjez@aol.com).

**Dr. Judd:** Is there anything else, Jamie?

**Harris:** Well, so many people have been good to me during my career. I would just like to thank them. First and foremost, I want to tell my beautiful wife, Michelle, how much I love her for putting up with me. God blessed me the day He brought her into my life. I could never have done the things I have without her. I'd also like to thank the 'crew' ... so to speak ... Bob Fleming, Keith Batsykefer, Bob Fleming, and Tim Bentley for helping me. These guys are all master lifters, and they are going to do some real damage in Daytona in May. I'd also like to throw a shout-out to Jim Ehsal, Cole Duorek, Keith Ray Neff, and of course Keith and his lovely wife Mary Joe. Since it might be a long time before I get to do an interview again, I want to throw out a thanks and good luck to Dan Kovacs. I was brought up with Dan in this game. I have deep respect for him as a person and as a hard-core lifter. Watch for big things from Big Dan. Last but not least, I want to thank Mike Lambert and Powerlifting USA for everything that they have done for me. Well, that's about it ... remember -- believe to achieve -- and God Bless.

thing ... where do you think it came from?

**Dr. Judd:** Let me guess ... Tonya Harding.

**Harris:** No! Mel That is where it came from. I was the first guy to start adjusting denim Frants shirts. When the word got around, then everyone was doing it, and the next thing I know everyone is taking credit for my innovation. I was the one who Inzer made his first denim shirt for.

**Dr. Judd:** So now I know who to blame for screwing up the sport, but I don't believe the sport is screwed up. In fact, big things are happening in powerlifting right now. Guys are putting up mindboggling numbers; huge people are being run, and more people are competing in the sport than ever before. Just about every month, a new superstar comes on the scene. I feel that the equipment is getting better, and so are the lifters and consequently so are the totals. It's exciting. When guys put up big numbers, it draws attention to the sport. I think that is a positive thing. It's a great time to be a powerlifter.

**Dr. Judd:** Doesn't it bother you though that there is so much factionalism in the sport right now?

**Harris:** Well, the way I see it is: you lift where you want, when you want - for yourself - not for the federation owners, not for the equipment makers, for yourself. I know I have made enemies in the sport because of where I lifted and because of the big numbers I put up. When that happens, I just try to remember that it's just a hobby. It is not life and death.

**Dr. Judd:** I think that is a pretty good philosophy. I've always said, if it's not your life and it's not your wife, that's about it ... remember -- believe to achieve -- and God Bless.

Jamie Harris is as controversial as he is great. He has been portrayed as powerlifting's "bad boy," but to the people around him he is a warm and loving human being who would give the shirt off his back to help someone else. What is undeniable is that Jamie Harris is one of the greatest bench pressers who ever walked the face of the earth, and when it comes to expressing himself, he leaves "no holds barred." In Part II of this intriguing interview, Harris talks about the 800 pound barrier and who he thinks are the greatest bench pressers of all time.

**Dr. Judd:** I heard that you were a hair away from hitting the magical 800 pound bench mark at the Mountaineer Open.

**Harris:** Yeah! After I benched 771 at the Mountaineer Open, I was positive I could break the 800 pound barrier. To be honest I should have done it. On my third attempt at that meet, I took 801 down and blew it up, but the lift was turned down because two judges said it didn't touch muchest. One of the judges told me after the meet that the bars were just centimeters from touching my chest. He said that you could not fit a piece of paper between the bar and my chest. It was that close. I knew I could do under the right conditions. After the Mountaineer Open, I was invited to the Arnold Classic. I figured that is where I would break the 800 pound barrier. It was the perfect setting. There was going to be a lot of competition, a huge audience, and the meet was going to get massive media coverage. Like I said, it was all so perfect for me.

**Dr. Judd:** What happened?

**Harris:** Well, I trained like a demon. I never pushed myself so hard. I wanted that lift so bad I could taste it. Everything was going super. Four weeks before the meet I benched 710 raw in the gym with absolute ease. Honestly, I think I could have doubled it that day. I should have backed off the next week and given my body a little rest. My training partners pleaded with me to back off, but I was just so driven to get that record I couldn't do it. The follow-

ing week I tried 615 for five reps without a shirt. On the fifth rep I tore my pec almost completely. In a blinding flash it was all over ... my dreams, everything I had hoped for, was gone in that instant. I knew that with all the big benchers who had recently surfaced the 800 pound barrier would fall before my injury would heal. That killed me. Worse yet, because of my injury, I was put on light duty at juvenile detention center where I worked, and I was forced to work the midnight shift. Consequently I couldn't even get to the gym without being totally exhausted. If things were not bad enough, a week later a layer of my cornea tore. I then went into a deep depression for months. The next thing I knew, I was wailing down Percoset, working all night, and sleeping all day. Just didn't want to have anything to do with any-

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