

# INTERVIEW

## Astonishing Bench Presser Jeremy Hoorstra interviewed by Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com

For those of you who haven't heard of Jeremy Hoorstra I'd like to ask you a question. What rock have you been hiding under? Jeremy is a class act and it's my pleasure to introduce him to those that haven't started to follow his young lifting career.

After competing in bodybuilding, Jeremy turned to powerlifting while attending Florida State University in Tallahassee. After one year of entering the sport, he had broken three national records and a world record in bench press at the age of 24. Competing in the 242 lb. weight class, Jeremy broke Mike McDonald's longstanding Raw bench press record of 29 years with a 605 lb. Bench press at the New England Record Breakers competition in Boston and increased that record to 615 lbs. at the 2006 Mr. Olympia competition in Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as an unsanctioned 635 at the Arnold Pro Classic in the Animal Cage.

My name is Mike Westerdal and I met Jeremy for the first time at an APA meet in Florida where he volunteered to work as a spotter and leader. A couple months later I had the opportunity to see him hit a 650 raw bench press at the Tony Conyers meet in Tampa. We set up an interview shortly after the meet and would like to share it with you now as Jeremy continues his record-breaking crusade.

**MW:** For those that haven't heard of you, please give us a little background information about yourself.

**JH:** I grew up in Leesburg Florida, which is just North of Orlando where I'm currently a firefighter like my father and grandfather were. I attended Florida State University and got a BS in Sociology with a minor in Political

doing 405 for reps when I was 17 at about 170 lbs. The hard thing was getting everything else to the same level as my bench. Work in progress...

**MW:** In the past you competed in bodybuilding and then moved on to powerlifting. What caused you to switch sports?

**JH:** The main reason I switched was I stayed strong throughout the entirety of the diet. I would lose a little strength but within a week or two after the show, I was benching more than before the diet. Once I did it, I loved it. Seems like a friendlier environment than bodybuilding, at least at the amateur level, but you can blame 10 weeks of boiled chicken on that. I think that powerlifting is the only sport that a guy, whose record you're about to break will be yelling at you to get it up and then shake your hand after. The sportsmanship is indescribable.

**MW:** What federations have you competed in and why did you choose them?

**JH:** I competed in the USPF in GA because it was close to FSU and because it was old school, which is what I was used to. I had never heard of a bench shirt or knee wraps. I had just gone in the gym and worked out as heavy as I could with good form and got stronger. I read up on USPF and thought it'd be a good federation to start in. After that, I did the NERB in Massachusetts, through the Atlanta Federation and the WPO at the Olympia.

**MW:** How important are your training partners, and do you think everyone needs them to break PRs? Where do you train and with who?

**JH:** Not only is it important to have one, but to have one you trust. I wouldn't be able to go heavy without someone like that. I am really big on forced reps and drop sets, both of which require a trustworthy partner and you simply couldn't do them without them. I train at Xtreme Fitness in Leesburg with my old roommate Brad Dunn and John Burkhead. Brad is a professional strongman and John is a masters world record holder as well. We also train a few times a week with a few other pro strongmen like Brian Turner from Scotland and "Shrek".

**MW:** Speaking of PRs, how did it feel when you broke Mike McDonald's 29-year old bench press in the 242s with a 605-pound bench press in the NERB competition?

**JH:** To be honest, it felt great. The record was almost 30 years old and no one had really come close to it. McDonald is one of the best lifters of all time and it was a huge honor to be next to him in that weight class.

**MW:** Tell us about your new training footage DVD entitled 242 RAW.

**JH:** Well, it's called "242 Raw" and is a training video leading up to the NERB, Mr. Olympia, and Arnold Pro Classic in the Animalcage along with footage from each. It has basic training exercises I do weekly, but mainly the heavy sets. There is a 675 flat bench, 605 incline, 365 hang-clean, nosebreakers with 315, military presses with 455 and some other extreme lifts. The DVD is for sale now at [www.criticalbench.com](http://www.criticalbench.com).

**MW:** I saw you hit 650 at the Tony Conyers meet here in Tampa this August. You're creeping up on the all-time record. Is breaking the all-time record your ultimate goal?

**JH:** Yes, as of now, I'm shooting for within two years. Before I do that, I want to bump the 242 record up to at least 675 or so and



Jeremy Hoorstra doing his pressing "thing" at the Mr. OLYMPIA show. (photographs provided by Hardcore Powerlifting, courtesy of Mike Westerdal, CriticalBench.com)

then maybe go up to the 275 pound weight class and go for the all-time. I might stay in the 242's for it but that just means more cardio. I don't like to drop weight before a competition. If I weigh in at 240, I compete at 240.

**MW:** Would you ever consider competing with gear as a change of pace?

**JH:** I've considered it but my strength as of now is in raw. I have a few shirts from Titan I've been messing around with but it always seems like there is a competition I have to wrestle lift and concentrate on my raw. I have always trained raw and that is what I like, but you do so typically like something you're not good at, so maybe one day I'll actually stop being lazy and take?

**MW:** What kind of a strength training routine do you use to build such a strong bench?

**JH:** I pyramid and then go to heavy max, forced reps, and drop sets. Other than that, I do all the power movements. I train like a typical bodybuilder, bodypart/day. However, I focus hugely on my lats, shoulders, and tris, which are all really important in gaining weight in your bench press. Five muscles all working together will lift more than one.

**MW:** Do you use the same routine all year round or do you have an off-season program?

**JH:** I switch it up but only every now and then. I've always trained the same but I'm about to start a new program that is the basic 10 week rotation where you do sets of 10 with 50% of your max, then the next week sets of 8 with 60%, etc. We'll see how it goes.

**MW:** Have you had any injuries during your powerlifting journey? How do you deal with injury?

**JH:** I've actually never really had an injury. Everyone has little ones like strains, etc. but I don't push them and so far, I've been lucky. Listen to your body, if it says stop, then stop. In some of the pictures it looks like you have a close grip on the bench. Is your close grip bench almost as strong as your regular bench?

balance of all four.

**MW:** There have only been a couple dozen lifters in history that have raw benched more than 600 pounds. If a lifter had a five hundred pound press, what advice could you give them to try to reach a 600+?

**JH:** 1. Go heavy, do forced reps and drop sets. 2. Keep going, be persistent. No one benches 600 lbs in a couple hard years of training. It takes time.

3. Eat more, no one eats enough (that doesn't mean eat more crap).

4. Change it up. Shock your body into growing.

**MW:** Last time I talked to you, you were still getting adjusted to the schedule at the Firehouse. How's the new job treating you?

**JH:** The new job is awesome, great career. It's tiring and sometimes you have long days and high pace and the calls are intense and extremely high pace and just keeping up with everything is really fun. It did take some getting used to the hours, right now 24 on, 48 off (maybe 48 on, 96 off soon), as opposed to working four hours a night bouncing at college, three times a week. I'm up before the sun two out of three days, up all night, etc. It's rough but I'm getting used to it.

**MW:** Yup, unfortunately you can't stay in college forever. If you were to predict the future of bench pressing how would you picture it 10-years from now?

**JH:** I don't know where the shirts are going and I honestly don't know enough about them to even guess. However, the raw bench press I think will gain bigger respect and I see the record being bumped up to at least 750 or so, hopefully by me but Nick Winters is gaining on it fast. We'll see how high the record will go.

**MW:** Thanks for the interview, Jeremy. Good luck on and off the platform, we'll be keeping a close eye on you!

## 242 RAW DVD With Jeremy Hoorstra Includes The Following Feats Of Strength!

- Flat Bench (raw) 675 x 1, 585 x 4, 495 x 10, 405 x 22
- Incline Bench (raw) 605 x 1
- Nosebreakers 315 x 4
- Seated Front Raises 105's x 6
- Standing Laterals 115's x 4
- Military Press 405 x 5, 455 x 3
- DB Military Presses 100's x 50
- Hangcleans with press 315 x 8
- Bent-over rows 495 x 5, 545 x 5

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