

INTERVIEW

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

LM: Let's start out with some background information about yourself, Leonard.

LMc: I am 35 years old, single and I've been a fifth grade school teacher for the past 8 years. This is my ninth year teaching at Ficquett Elementary School.

LM: Did you indicate to me previously that you coached football?

LMc: I have coached for the past eight years, but not this past year because I am going back to graduate school. I am going to Breneau University school to get my Masters degree in Elementary Education.

LM: How and when did you get involved with the sport of Powerlifting?

LMc: I got started in Powerlifting in 1983 when I finished High School. I went to a Community College in Pittsburgh and while I was there I began lifting on a Universal machine. Then I graduated to the free weights and I won a College competition with a 360 lbs. bench while weighing 160 or so. It was a touch and go meet and a friend urged me to get involved in more competitions. I won a couple more contests and got the bug and have been lifting ever since.

LM: Have you competed in 3 lift meets or strictly bench press contests?

LMc: I did a three lift meet, but just did token lifts so as to get a bench press record. So, I really haven't competed in a three lift meet.

LM: What are some of the records that you hold?

LMc: I have an American record in the USPF with a 490 in 1996 in the 181s. In 1998 at the USAPL BP Nationals I broke the National record with a 485, I did a 501 with a 4th attempt. I had a World Record in 1992 during the IPF Bench Worlds in Taiwan with a lift of 419 in the 165 lbs. class. In 1997 I had a World record of 490 at the IPF Bench Worlds in Canada. The most I have lifted was a 515 in 1997. I have accumulated about 250 trophies since I started competing in 1998.

LM: What was your most memorable moment in powerlifting?

LMc: Probably the competition in 1997 when I won my second gold medal in Canada. I lost in 1993, moved up a weight class in 1994 and finished 5th. In 1995 I finished second at the Nationals so I didn't go to the Worlds. In 1996 I finished

Leonard McCormick by Larry Miller



Leonard McCormick ... winning IPF gold.

third at the Worlds, in Denmark and in 1997 I finished first at the Nationals so I was excited to go back. We almost didn't make it to Canada because of the problems between the IPF and the USPF and USAPL becoming the new IPF affiliate. I had to call the Director of the meet to get our USA team a chance to compete.

LM: Have you noticed any differences since switching Organizations?

LMc: Now I am lifting with the USAPL because of their affiliation with the IPF. I only want to compete where I can qualify for the IPF Worlds. I don't see any real difference.

LM: What are your views on steroids?

LMc: I haven't had any problems with drug testing because I am drug free. I have been competing for 15 years and I usually get tested twice a year. I would like to see some year around testing for those people trying to slip through the cracks.

LM: Do you follow any special diets or supplement programs?

LMc: My diet consists of Chicken, Fish and Turkey. I have cut out the fried foods. I cut out pizza. I pretty much eat the same thing day in and day out. I have tried Creatine, but have cramped with it. For me, I feel that it is a God given talent. I have a natural talent and don't want to waste my money on supplements. I haven't found anything that works and you have to worry about the contents of what you're taking and whether or not it will affect your drug test.

LM: Who are some of the athletes that have impressed you over the years?

LMc: Chuck Brunson has been a staple in my camp for a long time. He and I feed off of one another. We met at a competition in 1992 in Florida. He went to Taiwan with me. I also lift with Robert Allen. The three of us get together and try and push each other. James Henderson has been a great help. We've been around the world together. He is a 5 time world champion. He keeps me spiritually motivated and helps me out with tips.

LM: How much longer do you plan on competing and do you plan on moving up a weight class?

LMc: I think I will finish my career in the 181s, especially since I am 35 years old. I have been pretty successful over the years and have finished in the top 3 since I started. As long as I can stay competitive, I'll stay in this weight class.

LM: What type of training program are you on?

LMc: Well, I do a 4x4 routine by doing four sets of 4 reps in ascending weight. I might start out with 315x4, 350x4, 385x4, 420x4. I did this routine for a while and then went to 4 sets of 3 reps. 315x3, 365x3, 405x3, 415 to 430x3. I do a 10 week cycle. Once I get to the end of the cycle, the 405x3 might go to 440x2. My assistance exercises include some dumbbell work and some triceps push downs and some heavy curls. I also train with very strict form.

LM: What type of equipment do you like to use?

LMc: I use Inzer. He has been very supportive over the years. I use the Extra Heavy Duty high performance shirts. His shirts have also kept me healthy and injury free. I never train with my shirt. He sponsors me with shirts and I put the shirt on the day of the meet.

LM: Who do you consider to be some of the best benchers since you've been to so many world meets?

LMc: The Russians have always been at the top. I don't know where they get these guys. I don't know if they're taking anything, but they pass the drug tests.

LM: Any memorable or funny moments during your lifting career that stand out?

LMc: There was an event that happened in 1998 at the World Championships in Amberg, Germany. There was a lifter from Japan who weighed more than I did and I made a bad call. I called for 501 and a few of my team mates told me I should go to 507. I wanted 501 to force the Japanese lifter to go to 507. They convinced me to go to 507, which I did. I thought I made the lift, but the judges turned it down and I ended up handing him the World title. It was essentially my fault, but that decision devastated me. I have never made a lift and had it turned down. Evidently it wasn't my time. But that was my most memorable event. It deflated myself in terms of the whole competition. It took me quite a few months to get over it and I am really not over it.

LM: Well, that sounds like a pretty depressing story. Do you have any that are a bit more humorous?

LMc: At the 1998 Nationals, my first attempt was 468 and I blew my shirt out. I only had 2 lifts left and had to change shirts. I went from a blown out shirt to a 501 on a 4th attempt. When we flew back from Paris after the Bench Worlds in Germany, I checked my bags, which I usually don't do. When we landed in Atlanta, my bags along with my car keys, were still in Paris! I will never check another bag.

LM: Any additional comments?

LMc: One day I would like to see Bench Pressing in the Olympics.

More and more countries are coming to the Bench Press Worlds every year. It should be an Olympic sport. Competing with other countries, it seems as if we are already in the Olympics anyway. I have been blessed to have traveled to many countries to compete. My mother has also been very supportive. She has been around the world with me. She went to Finland in 1994 and Denmark in 1996.

LM: Anyone you'd like to thank in closing?

LMc: Well, I'd like to give praise to God, my mom who has been very supportive and Chuck Brunson, Robert Allen, James Henderson, Chuck Harris, my father and Ficquett Elementary School. They love to see how I do and want to see pictures and get all the details. I would also like to thank my Principal Mrs. Rosalie Campbell. She has been very supportive through the years of my lifting career. I also want to thank you Larry and Mike Lambert for this interview.