

INTERVIEW

MARK SWANK interviewed by Ned Lowe

POWERSCENE made a couple of recent trips to Las Vegas, where Mark Swank is a big part of the powerlifting scene. We got Mark to give us some of his time to answer our questions.

NL: Tell us a little about your lifting career. Include best lifts, what weight class, and how long you've been lifting.

MS: My lifting career began in the late 80's, in Pittsburgh, PA (go Steelers). Throughout the years I have had the privilege socializing and competing with and against some of

powerlifting's greatest. Mr. Tim Bentley was my first influence, Tamara Grimwood, Ernie Frantz, Jeff Wright, and the list goes on and on. Now that I am competing on the national level and promoting meets in Sin City, I have the luxury of picking the minds of the best of the best. I am very lucky in this aspect. Most of my lifting has been done in the 275-308s. So far to date, my best lifts are 804 squat, 617 bench, 672 deadlift, and 2039 total at 268. Now that I have dropped to the 242s, my first meet at that weight will most likely be in May, I have done a 606 bench at 239.

NL: What are your lifting goals for 2006?

MS: My lifting goals for 2006 at 242, total Top 10, bench 650, and pull 700.

NL: What's your favorite of the three lifts, and why?

MS: Well Ned, I really don't have a "favorite" lift. Let me explain. I love to squat. There is nothing better than pushing yourself to the complete limit with a max on your back. Having the feeling that you are going to pass out, but something inside you says 'don't,

finish the lift you sissy!' To finish that lift is so self gratifying, having proven to yourself you had the guts to stand tall after staring directly into the eyes of fright and self doubt. I love to bench, because it comes pretty easy to me. Just put the weight on the bar. I love to deadlift. It is the hardest of the three disciplines for me. Setting a PR in the deadlift gives me the most satisfaction.

NL: You've got a gym in Vegas. Tell us about it.

MS: I have a power pit called Sin City Barbell. Right now, we are trying to relocate, but other than that I have a real great group of lifters that workout at Sin City Barbell. We take from all lifting disciplines. Westside, Ernie Frantz, and Metal. Right now we are doing Sheiko workouts.

NL: What's the best part of running a gym?

MS: Watching the excitement on a lifter's face after hitting a PR. Knowing that you were a part of that, is just great.

NL: What's the hardest part of running a gym?

MS: Paying the bills.

NL: You're putting on a lot of meets. Tell us what's coming up on your meet director schedule.

MS: I have been putting on meets here in Vegas for the last couple of years. We put on a great competition. Ask anyone who has lifted in one of my meets. The meets for 2006 look like this March 25, 26, the Southwest Powerlifting Championship, combined with the Police & Fire Nationals. June 2, 3, 4, the Senior Nationals, and that is going to be huge. Believe me, enter early and reserve your room and flights early. I'm expecting 200 lifters over the three days. This will be the best Senior Nationals ever, guaranteed. September we have the 2nd Sin City Powerfest.

NL: Where can lifters get more information on these meets?

MS: sincitybarbell.com, markswankpwr@yahoo.com, markswank@gmail.com, 702-245-6852 cell.

NL: Do you think a lot of lifters want to do a meet in Vegas so they can vacation for a few days as well?

MS: Heck ya, who wouldn't love to come to Las Vegas to compete in the land of 24 hour buffets, showgirls, blackjack, etc. I believe Vegas is the premier venue to hold powerlifting meets in the world. I have been hosting meets here in Vegas for approximately two years. I truly don't think there is a promoter out there who can put on a better show than we do. What I mean by that is, who can compete with the allure of Vegas? No one!

NL: What else should our readers know about Mark Swank, the lifter, the gym owner, and the meet director?

MS: I think that anybody who knows me knows I am for powerlifting 100%. Powerlifting is my life, and as much as parts of it drive me crazy, parts of it help me keep my sanity. One of the reasons why my meets run so well is that being a lifter myself I really try to focus on the intangibles. I really understand when lifters come to me and ask for 10 minutes more, that 10 minutes is monumental. Stuff like that. One of the many reasons my meets run so well is because of my Assistant Meet Director, Carol Upton, and her husband John. Believe me, when I tell you the meets would not run near as smooth without these two people. They are monumental to the success of the meets. So to them, a very special thank you. Ned, I would like to humbly thank you for this fantastic experience and the opportunity to express myself. Thank you so much.



Mark Swank is happy to be directing the upcoming APF Senior Nationals in Las Vegas (Photograph provided to Powerlifting USA by courtesy of POWERSCENE'S Ned Lowe)