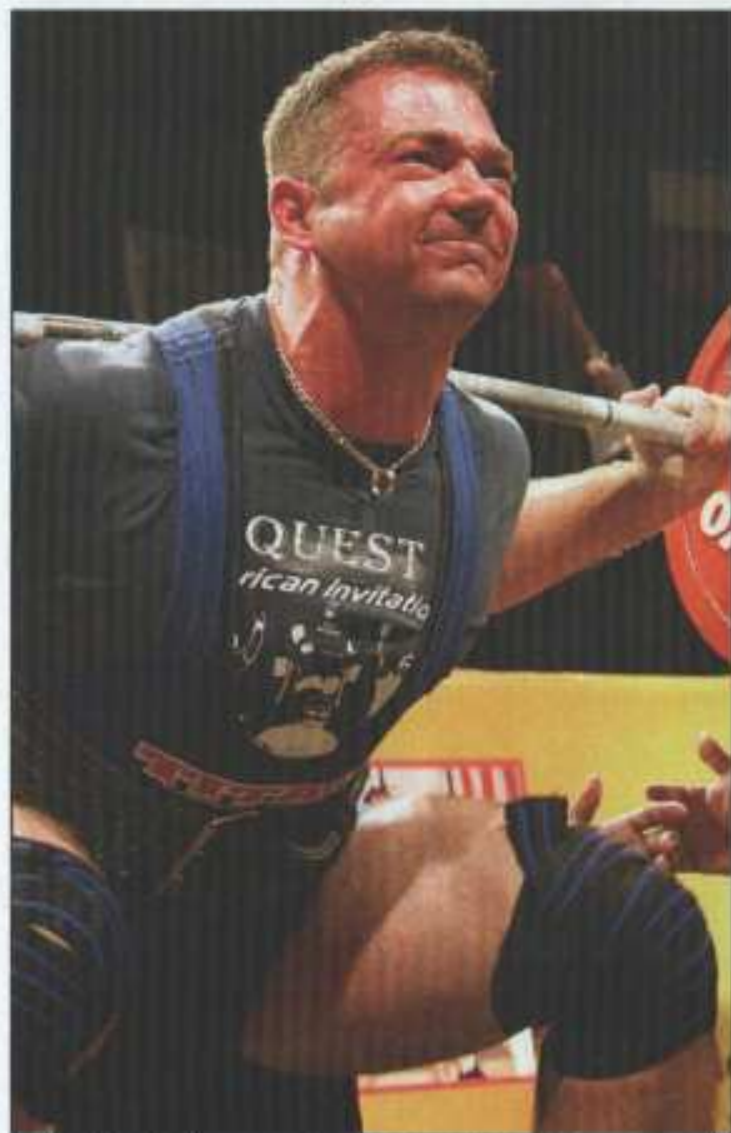


INTERVIEW

MICHAEL TUCHSCHERER as interviewed by PAUL LEONARD



Michael Tuchscherer squatting at the Arnold Classic (Scot DePanfilis)

Michael Tuchscherer is a 22-year-old 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base, in California and will be transferring to Minot, ND in April 2008. Originally from Indiana, Michael has acclimated well to training alone at the Vandenberg gym, resulting in pre-Arnold training bests of a 905 squat, 680 bench, and 835 deadlift. The Internet video clips of Michael show him performing these awesome numbers in strict IPF style, with few if any spotters present, and looking like he is capable of much more. Let's learn more about this powerlifting phenom.

PL: Mike, how long have you been

competing in powerlifting?

MT: I've been competing in Powerlifting for 7 years.

PL: Please provide a brief competition history:

MT: My first competition was the South Spencer High School Bench and Squat Championship in early 2002. It was an unsanctioned Squat/Bench meet that they run every year for football players. I got much more serious about Powerlifting while at the Air Force Academy. There, I got to compete in Collegiate National four times, Junior Nationals once, and Junior Worlds twice (including a trip to Bulgaria!). We also did a handful of local meets every year. My highest total coming out of the

Academy was 2105 @ 275 from IPF Jr. Worlds in 2006 (I won my weight class and was 2nd place in "best lifter"). Since graduation in May of 07, I've only done one other meet — the USAPL Iron Eagle Desert Thunder meet in Hemet, CA where I posted a 2210 total @ 275. My upcoming schedule is the Quest Invitational at the Arnold and Men's Nationals.

PL: Describe where you presently train:

MT: I train at the Air Force Base gym at Vandenberg AFB. It is commercial-ish, but overall, it's not bad. They have a decent power rack, a couple good bars, and 100 lb. plates. On top of that, they let me keep my chains and my Safety Squat bar in there, which saves me the inconvenience of having to bring it in and out everyday. I'll only be at Vandenberg until April. I'll be moving to Minot, North Dakota then, so I'll be training at the YMCA. I've been told the YMCA in Minot is very Powerlifter friendly, so I look forward to that. Before Vandenberg, I lifted with the Air Force Academy team. We had our own little dungeon in a converted racquetball court in the bowels of the Cadet Gym. We called it "The Pit". It was great!

PL: How do you feel about not currently having any training partners?

MT: I know a lot of people can't imagine powerlifting at a high level without them, but where there's a will, there's a way. Don't get me wrong — I had great training partners on the Academy team and I wouldn't trade them. But I don't have training partners now and, although it took a little time to get used to, I'm making fantastic progress.

PL: Could you describe some challenges you face to being an elite powerlifter due to the fact you are currently on active duty with the Air Force?

MT: I do have to pass a PT test, which consists of a 1.5 mile run, pushups, sit-ups, and a waist measurement. You get points for each "event" which is added for a final score. As long as you're scoring satisfactory or better, you're okay. If you are marginal or failing, then ... I'm not totally sure what happens, but I can't imagine it would be good for a Powerlifter! I've never been close to failing an AF fitness test, but that's because I make sure to run once or twice per week. Honestly, it hasn't affected my lifting by any noticeable amount. I have to plan for it, but that's not too big of a deal. Another "challenge" of being a Powerlifter in the Air Force is Unit PT. We have Unit PT once or twice per week with

our Squadron or Flight. That usually consists of some pushups, sit-ups, and running. It doesn't bother me too much because I try to run a few times per week anyway. Other than that, the Air Force is pretty supportive. I don't get any flak for being too heavy or anything like that.

PL: How would you describe your current training philosophy?

MT: I train using my own progression and conglomeration of methods that a few teammates of mine have dubbed RTS (the Reactive Training System). It began as a way to help intermediate lifters customize their programs to fit their individual needs and it's taken on a life of its own. It has components of the Westside program, Sheiko programs, some Inno-Sport ideas, and some of my own thoughts and it's combined into a package that is sane and personalized. I'm working on writing it all down in a book/manual format that I'd like to make available to everyone at some point. I've worked with a small, but growing, number of powerlifters who have been having very good results from this style of training and I am very excited about it! I know that some will think it sounds gimmicky or something, but there's no gimmick to the results we've been seeing!

PL: Would you please describe your current training program Michael?

MT: My main lifting sessions are Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Sundays I do raw squats, full range of motion benching with bands and/or chains, and either Good Mornings or Straight leg deadlifts. Tuesdays I do shirt bench, deadlifts (I train and compete raw in the DL), and incline or standing military. Thursdays I do suit squats, raw benching, and Safety Bar Squats with various depth/shoe/chain

(continued on page 90)



With his gold at the Jr. Worlds



Mike at the Air Force Academy.
(continued from page 8)

combinations. Friday I do a raw bench variation, a deadlift variation (often deadlifts with chains or standing on a block), and some board presses for higher reps. I vary the volume, intensity, and the exercise selection. There's actually a lot of planning that goes into my training. I've picked it up from a ton of different sources and it seems like it constantly changes/becomes more refined, so this is really just a snapshot of what I'm doing now.

PL: Could you detail your source of motivation Michael?

MT: I've gotten training info from all kinds of sources. I've got elements of Westside mixed with elements of the Sheiko programs. There are other parts I have learned from Russian manuals. Some of the parts I've come up with myself. I not only read about Powerlifting, but any kind of athletic development almost constantly! Because of that, I've managed to develop what I think is a good idea of how the training process should go. It's proven to be effective, not just with me, but with the people I've helped train over the years. It's like I used to tell the guys on my team, to get good at this, you really have to be a student of the sport and take every possible opportunity to learn. I read a ton about Powerlifting, I

keep very detailed training logs and analyze them to see how my body responds to different combinations of stimuli, and so on. There is a lot to learn in Powerlifting, and the more you learn, the better you get.

As far as motivation ... I look ahead and I look behind. I know my competition is working hard to beat me. To win, I need to work harder and smarter than they can. I also give this statement some thought from time to time: "Sometimes you go in the gym and you just don't feel like training, even though you should. If you decide to slack off, somewhere there is some kid that is training to be the best ever, and he just had the best training session of his life. That's ground you may never make up." I don't know who said that (probably a lot of people), but it always resonated with me, because I used to be that kid! Now I'm gunning for the top spot and I don't want to give that up without a fight.

PL: Please describe a typical week of training leading up to the 2008 Arnold.

MT: Sunday - SBD: Raw Squat - 80-90%, 5-6 sets, 635x2, 675x1, 705x2, 705x1, 635x2 (28 minutes); Bench +doubled light bands +90 pounds of chain - 80-90%, 5-6 sets, 305x2, 345x1, 370x2, 370x1, 305x3 (20

minutes); SLDL off 2x45lb plates - 3-4x8, 475x8, 495x8, 525x8 (17 minutes); Total Training Time: 108min

Tuesday: Shirt Bench - 75-85%, 5-6 sets, 535x3, 575x2, 605x3, 605x2, 605x2 (32 minutes); Deadlift w/belt - 75-85%, 5-6 sets, 655x3, 705x2, 750x3, 750x1 (25 minutes); Incline (thumb from smooth) - 4-5x6, 315x6, 335x6, 355x6 (9 minutes); Total training time: 103min

Wednesday - Extra: Single Arm External Rotation - 30x12x3; Decline Sit-ups - 10x10x2; Stretching Elliptical - 4x.2mi (2min goes); **Thursday:** Suit Squat +wraps - 75-85%, 5-6 sets, 705x3, 755x2, 800x3, 800x2, 705x3 (41 minutes); Bench - 75-85%, 5-6 sets, 415x3, 435x2, 470x3, 470x2 (15 minutes); SSB 12" Oly Squat +90 pounds of chain - 4-5x4, 405x4, 445x4, 470x4, 445x4 (27 minutes) talk too much. Total Training Time: 133min

Friday: Ply Press +doubled mini band - 80-90%, 5-6 sets, 405x2, 425x, 445x2, 385x2, 445x1 miss 2 (25 minutes); Deadlift +90 pounds of chain - 80-90%, 5-6 sets, 605x2, 655x2, 675x2, 675x, 605x2 (27 minutes); Pin 12 Lockouts +90 pounds of chain - 75-85%, 4-5 sets, 425x4, 455x3, 475x3, 455x4, 455x3 (21 minutes); Total Training time: 106min

PL: Anything you would like to say in closing Michael?

MT: I would like to thank my wife, Ayana. She's without a doubt my biggest fan and is 100% supportive of my powerlifting habit. She has flown across the country several times to help and encourage me at meets. She has taken it upon herself to learn a lot about powerlifting so that I can bounce ideas off her. There's no way I'd be in the same place without her support. I'd like to thank my parents, too. They have also followed me around the country to watch my meets. Mom helps by taking video of my attempts and Dad handles me backstage. They're great! My Dad even flew to Bulgaria to help handle me backstage at Jr. Worlds in 2006! That was an expensive trip, but he didn't hesitate - he knew I needed help and he was there! I'd like to thank Sherman Ledford of Quest Nutrition for his support not only with supplements and nutrition advice, but with feedback on my training also. I'd also like to thank Titan Support Systems for the supportive equipment. They have certainly made my life easier and my lifting better. Most of all, I'd like to thank God for the talent He has given me and the desire to do something with it. Without Him, I'm not having this conversation right now!



Mike has things figured out .. he's getting stronger in all the lifts at the same time. (Scot DePanfilis photograph.)