

Going Raw with **BRETT GIBBS**

BY HANI JAZAYRLI

HANI: Brett, thanks for doing this interview. I know the readers of POWER Magazine are excited to hear about you.

BRETT: It's an awesome opportunity. I'm honored and excited to give all of you an insight into my life of powerlifting.

Hani: Let's pretend for a minute that the majority of our readers don't know who you are. Describe the last two years of your powerlifting achievements so that we can have some context.

BRETT: Nothing short of life changing! It has been an amazing two years. 2014 was the year that I truly embraced raw lifting and set goals to achieve.

I remember texting a friend who wished me well before heading to the IPF Junior World Championships in South Africa in June of 2014. He was asking about my goals for the meet, and I said to him, with complete confidence, that I wanted the Open Squat and Total World Record along with the Junior Deadlift World Record – this is exactly what I did. I received the Best Junior Overall Lifter, which is something I never could have imagined, especially after finishing eleventh in 2011 at the Worlds in Canada [when I was] down a weight class.

I came to 2015 as an open age lifter, setting goals to win the World Championships in Finland and to chase the elusive 800kg total. I had a great first meet of the year in Australia, further increasing my numbers to total 785kg, just three months before Worlds. I had a disappointing day in Finland, finishing second to Jose Castillo who later failed his drug test. I got promoted to first, though it still felt like second to me, even though I was playing by the rules.

Finland left me in a position where I needed to rethink everything and clean up my technical efficiency. I teamed up with a good friend of mine, JP Cauchi (@5strong) and set a goal to compete at one more event for the year in Perth, Australia. I had a great training cycle and went 9/9 to total 800.5kg with the single lifts being: Squat - 285kg; Bench - 205.5kg, and Deadlift - 310kg. The squat, bench press, and total were all World Records.





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It has been a very satisfying two years of powerlifting in the IPF.

HANI: With that context in mind, in one sentence, tell me what it takes to make a world champion.

BRETT: I am obsessed with my goals; I don't let anything stop me from doing what I need to get done.

HANI: Do you have your eyes on any particular records with the upcoming IPF Classic World Championship? I'll be honest - I'm expecting to see a stellar performance!

BRETT: I don't really look at the records anymore. I'm looking into untouched drug free numbers. The building phase that I have been doing lately has the World Championships in mind. Yes, I plan to go for a total of 855kg, which consists of a 305kg squat, 229kg bench, and 330kg deadlift. Some of you may be thinking that this is a crazy increase. In my last peaking cycle, which was in December of 2015, I did a mock meet in the gym where I was

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around 86kg bodyweight. I hit a 300kg squat, 207.5kg bench, and 320kg deadlift, all on competition gear. I think big.

HANI: Among your laundry list of achievements, which one do you consider to be your proudest and most

dearly held?

BRETT: That's a great question, and it's so hard to answer. For me, there was something special about winning that title in 2014 in South Africa. I had so much support - I blew everyone in my class away and exceeded what I thought I would do.

HANI: How long have you been participating in powerlifting, raw and otherwise?

BRETT: I have a folder at home in New Zealand where I have almost every certificate from the competitions. I remember that my first competition was in June of 2008 at Powerhouse Gym in Wellington. I lifted raw, and I was hooked from that day on.

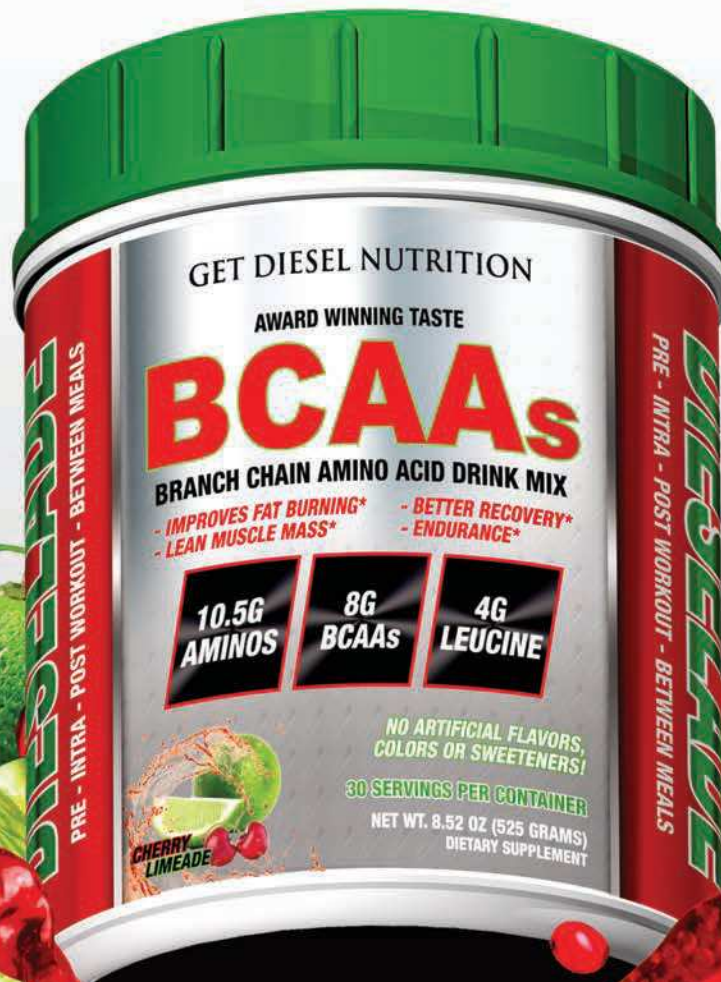
HANI: A lot of people might not be aware that you crossed over from equipped lifting [to raw] not that long ago. What made you decide to make the switch?

BRETT: I'd had enough of the long sessions, buying gear, telling people

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about the gear, people seeing videos of my squatting 300+kg etc.- it's just all crap. I was so thrown off of it by the time raw had really started to make its way in. I set a goal very early on, which was to get the 83kg Junior Squat World Record (355kg). This is the real reason that I went to my last equipped meet in 2014 where I was successful in achieving that mentioned goal. I love raw lifting. It's real. I can speak confidently about what I do - I can actually tell someone what I can squat and bench, and I don't have to follow it up with a blurb about equipment [laughter].

HANI: Do you come from any kind of team sport or traditional athletic background?

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BRETT: I have played many sports. The team sports I have played are rugby and soccer. Individual sports/hobbies that I have also played are golf (2 handicap), surfing, skateboarding, and skiing - those are some that I can think of. I still love to play any of those individual sports/hobbies when I get a chance.

HANI: What got you into powerlifting in the first place?

BRETT: So, as you saw above, I was into skateboarding. Mostly skating in a bowl, doing jumps, and carving up - just like I was surfing on concrete. One day, I was showing off a new move where I would jump over the spine of the half pipe; I fell back and shattered my right humerus bone (bicep bone).

After breaking it again two months later while throwing a javelin at school – yes, you read that correctly – I was referred to a physio who sent me to the gym in order to grow some muscle. After one year of ‘bro’ training, some powerlifters spotted me and asked me to train with them, which is exactly what I did. It all took off from there. A big shout out to Bevan, Spike, and Tony – the original Wai Weight crew.

HANI: What do you do for work? I know I’ve seen that you’re now a part of a business with Gold Signature Coaching, but I’m not quite sure aside from that.

BRETT: I left New Zealand towards the end of 2015, where I worked as a personal banker at the Bank of New Zealand for three years. The reason that I left NZ and moved to Canada was to start Gold Signature Coaching. I had to be in the country to get the company started, which is what I did. Gold Signature coaching is my only job as of right now.

HANI: On the note of Gold Signature Coaching, what sets your team apart from the other options that are available for the many novice, intermediate, and advanced powerlifters out there seeking guidance?

BRETT: Josh Hancott and I are the founders of the company. We were discussing this many months before launching in late 2015. We had a vision that two world champions in the IPF could work together to help other powerlifters achieve their goals. No other online powerlifting business can say that they have two world champions from the IPF handling their program. With almost ten years of experience in lifting myself, I have learned a lot along the way. Right now, GSC is focused on powerlifting – this is not the end for us though. We are looking to expand into nutrition, contest prep, and rehabilitation as a part of the value with working under GSC. Again, I don’t know of any other company doing this right now. We are the future of online coaching in the industry.

HANI: Do you do your own coaching or do you have someone keep an eye on you from the outside? Why do you opt for one over the other?

BRETT: I go through phases. Most of the time, I run my own programs, which

I either create [myself] or I create a spilt and train it intuitively. I have a good friend, JP Cauchi, who I always discuss numbers and movements with. He is a genius as well as a 100% top bloke. I worked with him for my competition peak leading into The Arnold.

I enjoy the stress taken away from myself when it comes to my own lifting. When I run my own numbers, I can get caught up in thinking things like, “Was that fast enough?” or “No, I am too sore today to hit that” and other similar

thoughts. When I work with JP, I get the numbers, and I get it done. I would never let him down by not getting the job done.

HANI: If you could give one detailed piece of training advice that is specific to all of the lifters out there, what would it be?

BRETT: I see so many people trying to overthink everything these days. Do not get caught up in the minute details. Progress is made with passion and the mentality that no matter what, if you

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work hard, you will get better.

HANI: Do you feel that your mentality and motivation level play a big role in your success?

BRETT: 100%. If you have the best program - the best "genetics" along with a weak mentality - you will not be any good. My mentality towards my lifting is one of the main reasons that I am lifting what I lift now.

HANI: How do you approach each of your training sessions from a mental standpoint?

BRETT: I need to always have a goal in mind. If I have the program written for a set period, I just approach each workout for what it is. I will always

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know what I need to achieve that day well before I get to the gym so I can visualize how I can get it done!

HANI: How do you keep yourself motivated?

BRETT: I have never lacked motivation, and I most certainly don't look to others for it. I set my goals so high, and I am still so far away from being close to them. It is these goals that I am always striving for that have kept me pushing well past what others originally thought I was capable of.

HANI: Let's talk more specifically about your training. Without giving away your secrets, tell us what a standard week looks like. Don't



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spare us any details here!

BRETT: Well, as we all know, with many years of training under one's belt, each year looks so much different than the previous [one]. Right now, being at the higher end of the talent in the 83kg class, I am training quite specifically to what we do in powerlifting.

Let's have a look at my last prep for the Arnold Pro Raw challenge:

Monday - high bar squats and board press

Tuesday - competition squats and Spoto press

Wednesday - competition bench press and light deadlifts

Thursday - front squats and "feet up" bench press

Friday - incline press and dumbbell press with triceps pumps

Saturday - competition squats, deadlifts, and glutes

Sunday - OFF

HANI: How do you feel about assistance lifts? What are your favorites?

BRETT: I am all for assistance lifts. I look at the selection of assistance lifts a bit like a temple. You imagine that the bottom of the temple has every exercise we could possibly think of, and right at the top is just the squat, bench, and deadlift. So, as we move from the bottom to the top, the movements become more specific to the movements at the top. I see beginner lifters needing to spend a lot of time at the bottom, and as we build the base work and start to get stronger and stronger, we slowly move our way up to the top of the temple.

My favorite assistance exercises are front squats, dumbbell presses, close grip pressing, and any rowing movement.

HANI: What do you do to prevent stalling on the big three lifts?

BRETT: Why would I stall if I am not at the desired destination? I put in more and more effort and reset mini targets to hit. I don't really change anything as far as programming - I just change my mindset towards the number on the bar.

HANI: If at all, how does your training change as you get closer to a competition?

BRETT: Well, I'm either running a

"THE FUTURE HOLDS
MANY WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP WINS
FOR ME, COUNTLESS
WORLD RECORDS AND
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THOUGHT POSSIBLE
AT SUB 100KG
BODYWEIGHT. I WILL
GO DOWN AS ONE OF
THE GREATEST IN IPF
HISTORY. I WANT
TO BUILD GSC EVERY
SINGLE YEAR SO THAT
WE CAN REALLY BE
IN A POSITION TO
START GIVING BACK"

peaking cycle, or I am training off-season. As we set out a peaking block, we are always seeing basic things like high volume, a set frequency, and lower intensity. As we get closer to a meet, the frequency remains the same.

HANI: Have you been through any serious injuries? What did you do to get through them?

BRETT: I have actually been very lucky. I had a partial pec, bicep, and triceps tear all at once which was caused by poor scapula position due to internal rotation on my right shoulder. I saw a physio straight away, had scans done, and I was prescribed external rotation exercises, scapular positioning drills, and had to have six weeks off of the bench press. It was really the best thing that ever happened to me - I learned so much, and I really look after my shoulders now.

HANI: What do you do in terms of your nutrition? Do you follow an "IIFYM" [If It Fits Your Macros] protocol? Or do you follow something stricter or perhaps something less strict?

BRETT: I follow the "Wing'N'It" diet. This basically consists of chicken

wings with "double ugly" sauce. It really is a game changer and has proven to deliver in the gym. But seriously, I have only followed any sort of diet for a period of time when I worked with Joey Zinghini - we counted macros accordingly, monitored body weight daily and had monthly photo updates. I felt that the benefits from this diet were not enough to continue doing it, but maybe it is something that I will do if I really need to be careful with my weight.

HANI: What does the future hold for you?

BRETT: The future holds many world championship wins for me, countless world records and numbers never thought possible at sub 100kg bodyweight. I will go down as one of the greatest in IPF history. I want to build GSC every single year so that we can really be in a position to start giving back. Eventually, I want to join forces with the IPF in order to help expand their reach and grow the sport of powerlifting so that we don't have world champions paying out of their own pocket to go and defend their titles.

HANI: Now, onto something a little more light-hearted. What would your perfect weekend look like?

BRETT: Blue sky, good friends, and a few drinks is always a good place to start. I love getting out and being active when the sun is shining. Playing a round of golf, going for a surf, and shooting some fish all come to mind when I think about the perfect weekend! This would have to take place in Hawaii.

HANI: How about your favorite food?

BRETT: Chicken wings. I love them. I wish I could eat them every day!

HANI: Where can we find you online?

BRETT: Instagram and YouTube are the main platforms that I use to show my lifting through.

Instagram - bg_waiweight

YouTube - just search Brett Gibbs and subscribe to my channel

Facebook - Brett Gibbs Powerlifting

HANI: A big thanks from all of us at POWER Magazine for taking the time to do this interview. Good luck in your upcoming competitive year! **PM**