

# DAVE

BY MARK BELL

Dave Hoff is the youngest lifter to squat 1,000 and 1,200 lbs., the youngest to bench 900 the youngest to total 2,400, 2,500, 2,600, 2,700 2,800 and 2,900 lbs. Hoff is rewriting record books at breakneck speeds and has turned the Westside record board into his very own resume of achievements. Haters, step aside and stop trying to say it's today's gear because the stuff Hoff wears now has been available for nearly 10 years. He was swarmed in a tornado of criticism and controversy after a Pro/Am showing where it appeared that he had stuck some type of object under his shirt to shorten his bench stroke. No one ever did find out the real story. Since that time, Hoff has buried the past with a blind fury of outrageous totals, all done with picture-perfect form, technique and class.

**MARK BELL:** The question on everyone's mind is this: How did you go about reinventing yourself as a pop star in Germany after Baywatch was cancelled?

**DAVID HOFF:** Come on man, don't hassle the Hoff!

**MB:** What sticks out (more than your gut) when you are on the bench is your



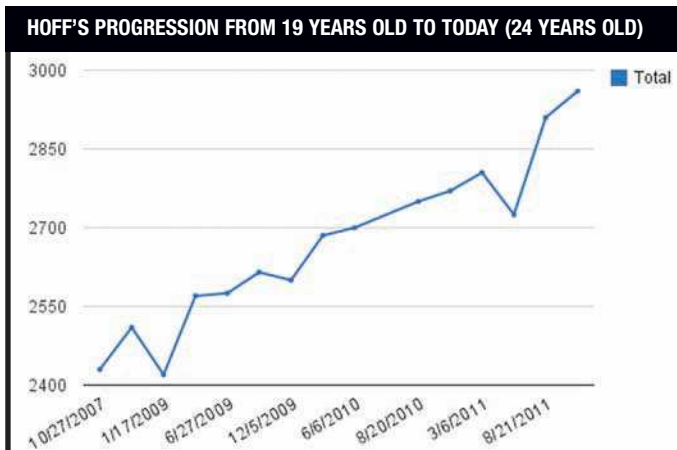




progress? Seriously, we are all impressed with the massive weights you handle, but in my mind you have cemented yourself as an all time great with consistency and mind-numbing progress. What is the key to some of your success?

**HOFF:** One of the main reasons for my success is the gym I train at, Westside Barbell. It's hands-down the greatest strength training facility on earth. Not to mention the countless number of world record holders who have come through that building over the past 25 years. I've had the privilege to train with the absolute best in the world for my entire career. Westside greats like Matt Smith, John Stafford, Joe Bayles, Greg Panora, Chuck Vogelpohl, AJ Roberts and Jake Anderson. I can go on forever.

I started training at Westside from the ripe old age of 15. Right then and there it was either perform perfectly or get out. Westside is very cutthroat, and only the strong survive. I was thrown to the wolves when I was 15 and that made me the lifter I am today. Not to mention being under the careful watch of the great Louie Simmons and Bob Coe, making me do everything perfect before I was allowed to move up in weight. I simply wasn't allowed to miss weights. Those are some of the reasons for my success.



WEIGHT CLASS	DATE	SQUAT	BENCH	DEADLIFT	TOTAL
275	October-07	1005	680	745	2430
275	August-08	930	780	800	2510
242	January-09	880	770	770	2420
275	March-09	985	800	785	2570
275	June-09	990	790	795	2575
275	August-09	1015	810	790	2615
242	December-09	1025	785	790	2600
275	March-10	1030	850	805	2685
275	June-10	1035	840	825	2700
275	August-10	1075	860	815	2750
275	December-10	1060	900	810	2770
275	March-11	1115	880	810	2805
308	June-11	1035	915	775	2725
275	August-11	1165	945	800	2910
308	December-11	1200	965	795	2960

**MB: What did you lift in your first meet?**

**HOFF:** My first meet was a bench-only meet. It was in Circleville, Ohio, and I had just turned 16. I benched 440 and just missed 470. Back then a kid benching 440 was insane. I would over hear people comparing me to Kenny Patterson (former Westside world record holder in the bench). At that moment I realized I had a God-given gift to do this sport, and I was hooked. My



first full power meet was a couple months later. I did a 700 squat, 475 bench and 600 deadlift for a 1,775 total at 220.

**MB: How long have you been at Westside?**

**HOFF:** Eight years. Its crazy how time flies by!

**MB: It is my understanding that you started powerlifting even before Westside. How did all that go down? And who did you train with?**

**HOFF:** I started lifting weights at a very young age. When I was in 6th grade I would out-lift the freshman football team; they all called me a Power Ranger. After that I moved up to lifting with the varsity football team and that's kind of how I got my base. From there on out I always wanted to be the biggest and the strongest guy. Soon I found former Westside lifter Travis Fletcher, who had a small powerlifting gym. It was pretty cool because I got to train with my brother and closest friends. I trained for a couple weeks, started moving weight around, and Travis said, "You need to meet Louie." I said, "Who?" He took me to Westside for a workout. I met Louie and I remember his words like yesterday: "You need to train at Westside." I've been there ever since.

**MB: What gave you the confidence to believe in yourself?**

**HOFF:** I'm a firm believer in the good Lord. Powerlifting is a gift that he has blessed me with. At night I pray and ask, "What do You want me to do, Lord?" And I wake up with numbers. It's been like that since I started lifting. I ask him what He wants me to do, and I do it. I put all my trust in Him and what He wants me to do. So that is more confidence than you can humanly get.

**MB: So it's not out of line to say you might be "Tebowing" before and after you bench a grand?**





**HOFF:** Very funny. Call it what you will, but Mr. Tebow and I share common ground; we both are successful in our chosen areas of competition. I go into it with the mindset that if I get it, the good Lord wanted me to have it. If I miss it, that's because He wanted me to miss it. He has a plan and I just go with it because the more I trust and listen, the further I go.

**MB:** I know Lou is Westside Barbell and he is your coach, but it also appears you get a lot of help and guidance from an old-time lifter who has been at Westside from the beginning. How important has Bob Coe been to your training?

**HOFF:** Bob Coe has been with me since the beginning. He pretty much built the base of strength I sit on today. Bob always was looking out for my best interest. He was a firm believer in, "If it aint

broke don't fix it." He would get together with Lou and finetune workouts just for me. I didn't have to think, all I did was lift weights. Bob added a lot of energy and passion to the gym and the training group. He made you feel like you were lifting for something better than yourself. He lives and breathes for Westside. If Bob Coe hadn't taken me under his watchful eye, I don't believe I would have made the kind of progress that I have been able to make. Bob never told me that I couldn't do something. He would always give me the odds and say, "Junior, I don't know how much longer you can go on making 100-lb. PR jumps." That was his way of saying no one has done this before you need to be careful so you don't get injured. Bob Coe did one very important thing with me: He never let me get hurt. If I tweaked something, I was done and didn't go heavy until I was

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healed. Bob gave me longevity in the sport. Bob Coe handed me my first 440-lb. bench press and my first 1,000-lb. bench. We have been down a long road together. Bob physically can't powerlift any more due to several injuries, so he wasn't ever able to really train. He came in on his own free will and helped me. So Bob, thank you very much for all the time, effort, blood, sweat and tears you have put into my career. I could have never done it without you.

**MB:** What does it mean to you to get your name up on the record board at Westside Barbell? To have your name with the best of the best — and even surpassed the best?

**HOFF:** It definitely is a great honor to be on that board. For years and years I looked at that board telling myself one day I will be up there one day. My most honorable moment was after the Pro/Am this past August where I squatted 1,165 at 275. I was standing in front of the board looking at one of the most popular names in all of powerlifting: Vogelpohl. I remember just stopping and looking at it. Chuck was the man and he set the bar so high. I never thought in a million years I would be standing in front of that board erasing his name to write mine. That single moment was one of the most memorable in my career. I've looked up to Chuck since I first saw him at the Arnold. He's been a source of great inspiration to me. He's taught me so many things about squatting and helped me excel my squat to world-class. In my opinion he is one of the greatest powerlifters to walk to planet. I really felt like I reached the top when I had the honor to replace his name with mine.

**MB:** It seems like you and Joe Jester are good friends and teammates. How has he helped your progress?

**HOFF:** Joe Jester is another person at Westside not many people know about. He is a very dedicated lifter. He eats and breathes Westside. He's a very true friend and no matter the issue, I can count on Joe. I've trained with him since I started at Westside. Not only is he a strong powerlifter (870-lb. squat, 630-lb. bench, 600-lb. deadlift for a 2,100-lb. total at 220), but he's also a great coach. Joe wraps my knees for the squat and calls my depth; he's my eyes while I'm lifting. If I didn't have Joe and Bob, powerlifting would suck! You are only as good as your help and my progress reflects

the great help I have gotten. So a very big thank you to Joe Jester. We are kind of like Batman and Robin.

**MB:** Explain what you mean by lifting one meet behind your potential?

**HOFF:** This is something I kind of fell into and goes back to Bob Coe wanting me to leave something in the tank at the end of the meet. I train to hit certain numbers and I lift to get the big total. I don't go balls out and try something I'm not 100-percent sure I can get. I believe that's a good way to get hurt. So I always try to stay a meet behind my actual potential. This is a big reason I can make big jumps at the level I'm at. Powerlifting great Travis Mash told me, "Powerlifting is not a sprint, it's a marathon." I took those words of advice and applied them. Ask yourself, "What's the hurry to get to the big weights? The weight will always be there, take your time and conquer the weight!" Do not fall victim to the weight.

**MB:** Did you really go from a 405-lb. bench to an 825-lb. bench in the same old denim shirt?

**HOFF:** My first bench shirt was a Cairns Xtreme denim shirt. In my first meet I did an opener of 425 then went 440 and missed 470. I went from 425 to 825 in the same exact shirt. I still have that shirt and I have every number I ever did written down the inside panel of the shirt. I guess that goes back to what Bob said — if it aint broke don't fix it — so I rode that shirt out until I got too big and couldn't touch anything anymore. That's when I made the switch to the INZER Super Duper Phenom (SDP).

**MB:** I'm glad you brought up the SDP. We have seen some great movement in your total and a big chunk has come from your bench moving up 100 lbs. when your bench was already unreal. Tell people what you feel the shirt is doing for you.

**HOFF:** Personally I think Inzer makes the best powerlifting gear money can buy. The SPD, more than anything, is just a comfortable shirt to wear. You don't feel like your arms are going to explode an inch from your chest. The shirt holds up under massive weights and gives you incredible pop out of the hole. The SDP works for me because it has an almost identical shirt groove to my old denim bench shirt.



**MB:** How often do you train in your shirt?

**HOFF:** Typically I shirt up every three or four weeks. After a meet, I wait four weeks to let my body heal and recover from the bashing it takes with those big benches. I also go by how I feel; if week three rolls around and I feel beat up, I will wait another week and then go. I never try to push the issue if I'm sick or tweaked a pec; that's a good way to get hurt.

**MB:** I noticed that as I got stronger, overload work in a shirt off boards did very little for me. What's your take on shirt work?

**HOFF:** I think it depends on where and when you are trying an overload exercise. I do one type of overload work and that's 10 weeks out from a meet, just to give my CNS a shock. Also, some people go too heavy with shirt work. Instead of getting stronger, some just try to whore out a bench shirt and find the tightest shirt that takes 800 lbs. to touch, when really they are a 700-lb. bench. Don't train beyond your means in a bench shirt. Use it and make it relevant to what you are doing in a meet. I see a lot of guys take 850 on a one-board to make 600 feel light in the meet. Keep it simple.

**MB:** Give us a quick rundown of your bench workouts.

**HOFF:** I use the Westside Method for the bench press. I have a dynamic speed bench press day where I concentrate on speed, explosion, form and technique, and then my max-effort bench day with a chosen exercise. I use a lot of bands and chain tension, mostly on dynamic speed days. I will use heavy tension as well on a max effort day, i.e. four-board press with four chains on each side. Sometimes I do singles, other times I do doubles. It changes every training cycle. I try to change little things in the training cycle and keep a base of five to six max-effort exercises.

**MB:** I'd say you're one of the best benchers this sport has ever seen. A lot of guys have a tough time locking weights out.

**What do you think the issue is? What have you done to build a full power bench world record of 965 lbs.?**

**HOFF:** I think a lot of guys spend too much time in a shirt and not enough time training to get strong. Some people just like the self satisfaction of taking 850 to a three-board for two instead of actually being able to touch and bench press 800 lbs. Some people will try a shirt and, if that didn't add 30 lbs., they try another shirt a week later. When that shirt goes bad they go back to the one they used the previous week. I just get in a shirt and handle the numbers I'm going to attempt in the meet. It's very basic. I take my time and the numbers come with consistent training. You only get better or worse, no one stays the same. I have made it a priority to get better each meet, even if it's only an increase of 5 lbs.

**MB:** Last meet you nailed a 1,200-lb. squat weighing 278. Tell us about your training going into the meet and about the purpose behind squatting into chains.

**HOFF:** I did this meet because I felt like I left way too much at the Pro/Am in August. I wanted to go out and try some big numbers to really see what I could handle and just take a shot at another World Record. I box squat 75 percent of the time, again using bands and chains for resistance. I did small three-week waves of box squatting and on the fourth I took a free squat. I used the chains basically to get comfortable in gear and to handle the numbers I wanted to do in the meet.

**MB:** What assistance movements do you like to do for the squat?

**HOFF:** I do a lot of isolated hamstring work. Lou invented a new hamstring curl machine that I have been living on and I believe it's been a huge part in my squat jumping. I also do a lot of belt squats and live on the reverse hyper. I pretty much train like a bodybuilder for





built confidence for me because I don't let myself miss in the gym, and that carries over into the meet.

**MB:** When you got your first 2,500-plus total, you deadlifted 800 in August 2008. Your last total (three years later) in December 2011 was 2,960 with a 795 deadlift. Your total has gone up 450 lbs., but your deadlift has stayed about the same. Tell us what you feel you need to do to improve your deadlift after such huge squats and benches.

**HOFF:** The deadlift has always been tricky. It's not a lift where you can throw gear on and instantly add 50 lbs. It's hard to put all the numbers together after big squats and big benches. The deadlift is a continual work in progress. It's a lot of form and technique and if you're off the slightest bit, it either feels like a million lbs. or you miss it. You can only do so much in a training cycle leading up to the meet. One of my flaws is holding back on the deadlift at times. To improve I have to keep trucking on. In the near future I think you will see a deadlift PR out of me.

**MB:** Give us some of your favorite deadlift exercises that have helped you pull 800 or more in eight competitions.

**HOFF:** I like to do heavy speed pulls from the floor with added band resistance. I also like rack pulls with the doubled over purple bands; it's a great exercise to work the lockout and grip. I also train both sumo and conventional, but only pull sumo in the meet. I learned this from Chuck V. and it has carried over well for me.

**MB:** How do you choose attempts for the meet? And how is it you are able to hit so many and almost always seem to have a chance at a PR total and/or world record total?

assistance work. I tend to isolate muscle groups for squat assistance.

**MB:** I've talked to many great lifters over the years, and several have said they like don't like to max out all the way in training. What's your take on this?

**HOFF:** I feel the same way. I believe there is a time and place. I like to shut it down early and have more left rather than barely get something and know it's all I had. I guess in a roundabout way it

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**HOFF:** It's pretty simple. If I get a PR, I move all my attempts up from the last meet about 20 lbs. or so. If I didn't do well in a particular lift that time around, I keep the training numbers around the same and repeat it at the next meet. Don't rush through numbers to get to the "big ones," just take your time and pace yourself. I have a plan and I stick with it. I choose my first, second and third attempts immediately after I'm done lifting in the previous meet. I usually have a plan "A" and plan "B" in case the day isn't the best. If I'm firing on all cylinders, I go with plan "A". I don't pick numbers I don't think I can't do.

**MB:** We all know great things don't happen without a lot of support, so tell the fans out there who has helped you become a multiple world record-holder.

**HOFF:** My father more so than anyone. He has always been a big supporter. He's extended a huge helping hand and I can't thank him enough for all he's provided me. He's the best father and role model any son could ask for.

Louie Simmons opened the door and let me train at Westside. Lou has set the stage for my powerlifting career. I'm grateful for his time and effort, and all the world records he's paid me for! (That's right, Westside pays you \$750 for every world record you break).

Bob Coe has never doubted me or told me I couldn't do some-

thing. Big thanks to Joe Jester for always giving me constructive criticism, wrapping my knees and handling me at meets. He's got one of the best eyes in powerlifting and is one of the most knowledgeable people out there. Also big thanks to Chuck Vogelpohl for teaching me the secrets of the squat. I hope to carry on his legacy. Also thanks to Chris Mason at Atlarge Nutrition for his generosity. He's got the best supplements out there. And John Inzer for providing me with the top notch powerlifting gear. And lastly, a big thanks to all my Westside teammates past and present, I couldn't have done anything without all my teammates, day in and day out, pushing me to the limit.

**MB:** Wrap this up by giving Power readers three tips to a huge bench.

**HOFF:** One, get a shirt that fits properly and that you can get to touch with relative ease. Once you have built PRs up in that shirt, move to a tighter one and repeat.

Two, stay within your means and be true to yourself and what you can do. Gym lifting doesn't mean crap in a meet. Make a plan and stick with it!

Three, don't miss workouts. If you want to consistently improve your bench press, you are going to have to be consistent in the gym. **PM**

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