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der workout, and do you train shoulders on a separate day from bench?

**Spoto:** On max effort bench my shoulders get so fried that I don't need to do any other shoulder movements. On my second bench day, which is either a rep day, speed day or board work, I do direct shoulder work.

**Bell:** Tell me more about this second bench day. Tell us what a rep day, a speed workout and a board workout look like. Do you feel this second day helps?

**Spoto:** Rep day: On the rep day I am looking to get a good workout for type I muscle fibers. I will lift at a faster pace between sets and use lighter weights. I will bench press but I will also do some isolation movements for chest on this day, usually one or two types of fly movements. During my max effort day I am focusing on explosiveness and the amount of weight being used. The rep day I actually concentrate on contracting the muscle I am using, very similar to how a bodybuilder would work out. Between the higher reps and the faster pace I actually get a pump, which almost never happens on max effort days. Besides the type I muscle benefits, I also feel this type of training helps with recovery from max effort work and helps strengthen tendons.

Speed day is pretty simple. The goal of this is to move the weight as fast as possible on the concentric portion of the press. I think a lot of people don't get the maximum benefit from this style of training because they do it like it's three fast reps. I look at this as three singles. So instead of going fast on the eccentric portion of the lift, I try to go at a speed that would be similar to my 1RM decent. Once you touch your chest you explode like it is your 1RM, then reset and repeat for a couple more reps. I will do six to eight sets of this. I prefer to have bands so I don't hyperextend my elbows. After warming up I will go use 50 percent of my 1RM for a couple sets, then decide if I want to stay there or add a little weight. I don't count the bands as part of the 50 percent.

For board work I prefer using a three-board because it puts my arms at a 90-degree angle at the bottom, which is



Spoto teaching Mark Bell some arm wrestling pointers

a common sticking point for most people. Most of my board work will be in the three- to five-rep range. Its gets rough doing board work on your second bench day, so if you haven't been eating right or getting enough rest, then you might not be ready for another heavy day so soon. I think most bench specialists can recover enough to add this to their routine once or twice a month, but it would be really hard for a full meet guy who probably has done squats and/or deadlifts in between the two bench days to be ready to go heavy again.

**Bell:** What does the main bench day look like? Can you lay out a typical three- or four-week cycle?

**Spoto:** A max effort bench day will start on the flat bench every workout. I will do a bunch of warm-up sets until I feel ready for some work sets. I will take around 10 percent less than my goal triple for the day, and do my first triple. That is considered my first work set. I put a little weight on and hit another triple — that will be the second work set. Now I go to my planned triple for the day and do that for around three sets. After that I throw on the SlingShot for a couple triples of some overload work. Then I lower the weight and do a couple close grip sets for eight to 12 reps, and flat bench is done. From there I go to a push press movement or dips. I finish the day off with some triceps accessory work.

A three- or four-week cycle would all

be based around the triple work sets and trying to add 5 lbs. from the week before.

**Bell:** I noticed you like to use a lot of reps in the warm-up. I know that's how you roll, but many great lifters past and present have used low reps to "save their strength" for the big sets. Do you feel that if you train in a slightly pre-fatigued state that you'll get results faster? Perhaps it's from an increased work capacity?

**Spoto:** I have tried on a few occasions to cut my warm ups, but didn't like it. I really think your body can adapt to almost any workload and volume. High volume is how I've always warmed up; my body has just adapted to it by now. I would rather be over-conditioned than under-conditioned.


**Bell:** Looks like you're fixing to crush your own record in November at Super Training. With the team of Stan Efferding and Creed Childress in your corner, I have no doubt you'll smash another WR or two. As our last question of the day, let's have you finish up by talking about how your team got you honed in on the world record.

**Spoto:** I am very lucky to have great training partners. Any lifter will tell you that good lifting partners are an absolute must to really excel in this sport. We all have days when you just don't have that fire in you. Having elite lifters pushing you is indispensable on those days. One of the most important benefits of training partners is lifting technique. An experienced lifter can see flaws and mistakes you are doing that you can't see or feel when you're lifting. Their feedback on bar height, elbow position, leg drive, etc., is what helps you fine-tune your technique. I can't forget the actual lift-off — nothing will screw a lift up more than a bad hand-off. It gets a little tricky when you're dealing with 700-plus lbs. and lifting off from an awkward angle. I am lucky that I have never had a bad hand-off in training or a meet. There is no doubt I would not have broken the record if not for all the people who helped me, and not just my training partners. I would like to thank all my friends and family for their love and support. **PM**

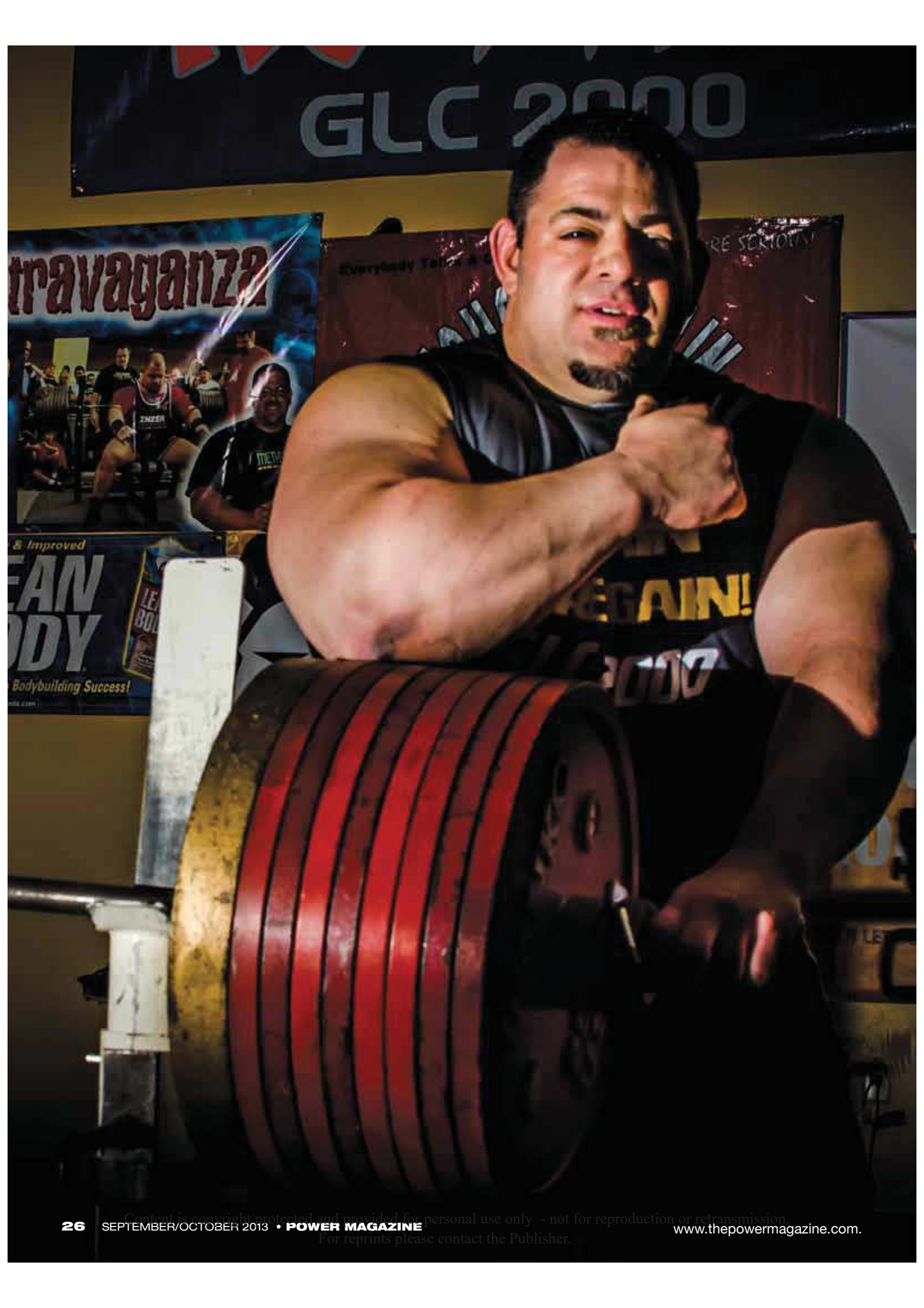
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# THE TINY CONQUEROR

BY JEFF "ROBOT" IRION

How tiny is a Tiny Meeker? According to the man himself, 5'9" tall and 325 lbs. You might be feeling a bit misled upon learning this, but don't be. As he explains, his real name means "little one conquering," and that's where the nickname Tiny came from. But more important than his unique powerlifting nickname, the 42 year old bench presser from Texas recently broke the

All-time Bench World Record with 1077 lbs. Keep reading to learn more about his journey to the record, his training methods, and the big things that are in store for Tiny Meeker.

**Congratulations on breaking the world record bench with 1077 lbs! However, I hate to tell you this, but the judges on the Internet turned your lift down. What do you have to say about that?**

I am just a lifter. I am not a judge. I lay on the bench, take the bar to my chest, wait for the press command, and wait for a rack command. I have no power over what a judge calls. I have been competing for over 25 years, and I have gotten good calls and bad calls. It is what it is.

I wish I could post a video on the Internet and everyone says, "that was perfect," but it will never happen. It saddens me every time I read a negative post. I have worked extremely hard to get where I am today.

**Your road to the world record has not been without challenges. Tell us about some of those.**

There were 2 years awhile back where I bombed almost every meet, mostly because I did not have the proper equipment to train with. Back then, I was training at a national chain gym where the most weight I could load on the bar was 855 lbs. I would actually enter a meet every weekend just to feel 900+, but I still needed to work with it more. Finally, one



day I met Randy Risher. He bought me a 1000+ weight set, and that is when my bench blew up. I benched 900 in a single-ply Rage X, then 942 in a double-ply Rage X at the Mendy Classic, and after that I got 948. Later, I switched to the SDP [Super Duty Phenom] and hit 1047 at the Biggest Bench on the River and barely missed 1102 on that same day. I honestly should have went for 1076 or 1080 on that day, but I'd trained for 1100. That was in 2010. About a month or two after that, I tore my labrum [an injury to the shoulder joint].

**How did you rehab that and come back to not only bench a PR [Personal Record] but to break the world record?**

It was a very long road back. A lot of deep tissue massages from Bob Garret and a lot of ultrasound work and adjustments from my chiropractor, Dr. Charles Hilborn. I would take two products called GLC 2000 [joint care product] and MSM. I doubled up the dosage on those, and not much longer after that,

my shoulder really started healing. The problem I had is that I was really rushing to try to get certain endorsement deals. I wanted to be able to lift in particular shows. When I would put my shirt on, I could bench pretty well. Not my best, but enough to put up some big lifts and win some shows. Right after my injury, I couldn't even bench the bar. After 6 weeks, I could finally bench 315 raw again. Once I did, I knew that if I put a shirt on I was good for 800 lbs, since the shirt would hold my shoulder together and allow me to bench pretty well.

What sucks about a labrum tear is that it goes from one point to another. From day to day it may go to your teres minor, your pec minor, or your bicep, because your body is trying to overcompensate. The problems would never go away until I finally took a month off of training and doubled up my dosage of GLC and MSM.

**How do you train the bench?**

Every workout is different each week. I only bench 1 day a week. If

I feel good, I go heavy. I never shirt up if I do not feel good. I might even take two to three weeks off if I ache. I will lift very heavy over a month out from a meet. At 4 weeks out, I want to know what my opener weight is. If I have issues touching my chest, then I have a few more weeks to work on it. I do not want to max out at this point because I want to be healed up by the meet.

In my opinion, in order to be stronger you have to feel big, big weights. Bigger than what you're going to try to lift. If your goal is 500, then you might want to feel 600-700 off of boards, so when you go for 500, it kind of feels like nothing. When in the gym, we can lift whenever we want to lift, but at a meet you might be sitting around for 10 or 15 minutes, or even up to an hour. You never know when it is your time. So on some training days, you should take big breaks between lifts and other days take small ones.

**What shirt do you wear?**

It depends on the federation. Right

# 1076.9 Pound Bench. Any Questions?



Tiny Meeker

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**to do some benching with a buffalo bar to get used to that extra range of motion?**

No, I think some stiffness is good for the bench. I do not do much stretching of my upper body. I do stretch my legs, since I have a lot of lower back issues. Also, if my lower back and hamstrings are tight, then I will have a hard time arching and keeping my feet flat on the floor.

**I've seen some training videos of you benching in your shirt with reverse bands. What's your philosophy behind that?**

The goal is to feel a LOT more weight than you're trying to hit at a meet. Even more, getting your hands and body used to feeling some really big weight. Reverse bands do a great job of focusing on the triceps without putting a beating on the whole body. You really want to concentrate on speed when using them.

**A lot of people may not know this, but in addition to being a great shirted bench, you've also hit 600 lbs raw...on the deadlift. How did you build this incredible raw strength?**

Ha ha, I am going to answer this in a different way. When I blew my labrum, I wanted to find out which exercise could really blow my back up. After asking a lot of other big lifters what they did, everybody kept telling me to pull. So I started doing pulls in my workouts. Usually I compete bench-only, although I did some full meets a long time ago. I thought it would be fun to go to a show and surprise everybody by deadlifting. I didn't have my deadlift suit on for that meet, so I ended up deadlifting raw and hitting 600 and 611 conventional. I wear a suit now and I am starting to like pulling sumo better. I think it would be cool to bench 1100 and pull 700 or more in the same meet.

**Do you train your raw bench?**

I don't max out raw, but I always have raw benching in my training. I like to feel big weight raw with boards, but I am a bit worried about going for a full range bench raw.

**Will you ever compete raw?**

No way! That's actually how I blew my labrum - I was benching heavy raw one day. And because of my labrum tear, I will never max out raw ever again. I recently started repping 500 and 550 off a 1 board again, but I am

now, my only focus is the Super Duper Phenom. I pretty much want to hit 1100, then start dropping weight classes and putting up 1000 lbs in each class. And the Phenom is the only shirt that I think will work for my goals. I used to bounce from one federation to another, but not anymore. I want to get the most out of the SDP for now and make my switch later.

**Is it tricked out?**

Nope, it's just a stock SDP. The ones I wear for 1000+ are triple ply, but otherwise, I'll wear double ply.

**You've done some impressive single ply benching in the past. Tell us about that.**

I was the first person to bench 800 and 900 in single ply. I believe my best is 914, and I narrowly missed 1000 at the WABDL [World Association of Benchers and Deadlifters] Worlds. Don't be surprised if I go after that record again soon! (Currently held by Mike Womack with 942.)

**What shirt did you wear for single-ply?**

In the past I wore a Rage-X, but if I go after the record again, I will be wearing the Inzer Bolt. It is a new shirt, but it is IPF [International Powerlifting Federation] legal and some guys are wearing them. I was able to hit a very easy 900 on the first day I broke it in.

**Why don't you wear a belt when you bench in a shirt?**

I don't think the belt really helps the bench. I think most lifters wear a belt

to hold their shirts in place. Most of my shirts have velcro backs, so I just strap the back extremely tight and most of the time the shirt won't move. I used a plain leather belt when I wore a closed back, but again, just to hold the position of the shirt.

**You've done some bench for reps meets in the past. Do you use reps in your training?**

Yeah, I post some workout videos on Facebook and most of my workouts are reps, not singles. Full-range some days, boards on others. It depends how close I am to a show. When I am far out, I can go heavier and do more full-range of motion, although I am usually more concerned about handling the most weight I can when I am further out. When I do reps, I work on speed, trying to get the weight down faster and explode up faster. The quicker I touch my chest, the more energy I have to blow it back up. If I have to fight to get it down, then I am going to have a harder time touching and pushing back to lockout.

That brings up a point that I wanted to make. People don't realize this, but when you've got 900 lbs on the bar, it bends so much that the bar has to travel maybe an inch or two farther to touch. That is one reason why guys have trouble touching huge weights. After all, I can touch 600 lbs in the same shirt that I bench 1000 in.

**That's an interesting point that would never occur to most people. Do you think it would be a good idea**



very timid. I think that with boards I can safely go heavy. And with the Sling Shot, I have some support, so I feel much more secure going heavy.

I talk to Eric Spoto, and I'm in awe when I watch him lift. And he says the same thing when he watches me lift. I will never find out what the limit is, meaning the heaviest you can go before your body falls apart. I feel like the shirt will help keep me safer, although there is still some risk, of course. Look at when Ryan Kennelly attempted 675 raw, or Scot Mendelson's recent injury. It would be cool to have all the records, but I'm happy having just one...or two, with single ply!

**You've broken the bench press world record. What are your goals now?**

Hitting that world record bench was really a relief. My next goal is to hit 1100 and hopefully more on the same day. After that, I'll start dropping weight and doing yoga to work on my flexibility and try to go after some more records. I'd like to get as low as 259. But at this point, I think my inflexibility is actually helping my bench, so no yoga for now!

Also, one thing about me is that I like to lift in other federations. Years ago, I lifted in the USAPL. I've always wanted to lift for the USA in the IPF Worlds, so maybe in the future I'll make another run at that.

**Do you squat?**

Yeah, I squat, and I can squat a lot of weight, but only with the cambered bar or a safety squat bar. I have actually squatted over 900 using a cambered bar and only wearing knee wraps. I can't get under a regular bar due to lack of flexibility from a few car wrecks back in the day. I have some back problems from those, and I was told not to squat or pull ever again. But interestingly enough, my back is better now that I'm training those lifts. I also do very heavy leg presses for high reps, leg extensions, and leg curls. I do my best to balance my entire body.

**What are your top tips for benching?**

My biggest tips on the bench are 1) perfect form and 2) listen to your body, plain and simple. If I had listened to my body, I never would've gotten hurt because my shoulders were just really tight the day I blew my labrum. So listen to

your body!

**Who would you like to thank?**

First, I need to thank GOD, my wife Courtney, my family, and my friends. My brother Jason Meeker for doing all of my PR work, Anthony Saraceni for sponsoring me and giving me an opportunity to focus on my lifting and training others. Mark Bell and Power Magazine. I need to thank John Inzer and the whole IAD [Inzer Advance Designs] team. John has always supported me, even when I was going through some rough times. He just

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