

# INTERVIEW

Personal dialogue between  
PL USA Magazine and the  
Sport's Greatest Names.

## Carrie Boudreau interviewed by Marty Gallagher

Carrie Boudreau is the greatest female powerlifter of the past decade. During her reign she set American and world powerlifting records that still stand, six years after her retirement. At

the peak of her career she was untouchable, the female version of the great Ed Coan. Carrie hailed from rural Maine, a state that spawns champion lifters all out of proportion to its geographic size and population. Apparently the harsh climate creates champions in an athletic process akin to coal being pressurized into diamonds. Carrie Boudreau was raised in the town of Raymond and from Day One of her power career it was apparent that she was unique. A veritable strength Mozart, her short stature, unique structure, abundance of fast-twitch muscle fiber and fierce mental attitude all combined and aligned and coalesced. She underwent a Hulk-like metamorphosis and became the perfect powerlifter, the ultimate female lifting machine.

Boudreau hoisted incredible iron and with offhand ease began dispatching the best female powerlifters in her country to offer. Within two years of taking up the sport she captured her first national title. That was just for starters: by the time she was just for starters: by the time she hung up her power belt, Carrie captured five IPF world titles and won the coveted champion of champion title at the IPF world championships on four separate occasions. In addition she won the prestigious World Games title twice, 1993 and 1997. One Ukrainian world champion summed up the worldwide impression of Boudreau, shaking her head in wonderment as she watched Carrie set a world record in the deadlift and total (earlier she'd broken the squat WR). "She lifts on a different level than the rest of us." The ultimate compliment was when the world's top female lifters began to flee the 123 pound class in droves, either dropping to 114 or bulking to 132, all to avoid the unbeatable Boudreau. She routinely lifted more in national and world competitions than the cham-



Carrie Boudreau consistently broke the IPF records.

actually the point where you need to explode in weightlifting. In Olympic lifting often when the weights start to pull I still tighten my upper body - as if I were deadlifting - instead of keeping my arms loose; the proscribed proper technique for Olympic lifting. I subconsciously try and use my upper body strength to pull the bar upward instead of allowing my hips to kick the bar upward. This interferes with the proper path the bar needs to travel. Because I haven't 'unlearned' my ingrained powerlifting techniques, I cannot lift nearly what I'm capable of in a pure physical sense.

**PLUSA:** How does your training compare to the other Olympic lifters? I would imagine given your unique background, training is different for you than for others without your incredible strength?

**CB:** Since I'm very strong and have a great strength base from powerlifting, my workouts are far different than most of the other Olympic lifters I train with. Most people taking up Olympic lifting need to develop strength along with technique. I need far more work on technique. I started Olympic lifting at a late age, 31, and my workouts are very different than those of my teammates: more technique training, less strength training.

**PLUSA:** Do you ever see yourself competing in powerlifting again?

**CB:** That's hard to say. There are a lot of factors involved. Currently there are too many powerlifting federations and this takes away from the significance of being a national or world champion. Countless people claim they are 'world champions' and this dilutes the title. The sport, in my opinion, has lost integrity. It would take a lot to get me interested in seriously competing in powerlifting again. I might compete to help a friend or a local team. I've been asked to do some lifting for the Abilities Unlimited Team (Team Savannah's Special Olympians) so I might compete under the right circumstances.

**PLUSA:** This question is from Mike Lambert. You retired from powerlifting at about the same time that the USPF was replaced by the ADFPA and became the IPF's recognized national federation - coincidence or purposeful?

**CB:** That whole episode was bad, it was the straw that broke the camel's back and confirmed my

decision to get out of powerlifting. I lifted my guts out at every competition and made all the goals I set for myself. When I am asked how long I would lift, I reply, "As long as it's fun." The fun went out of powerlifting and was replaced by bickering, backstabbing, and false promises. It was sickening. The USAPL claimed that its top priority for the athlete was its top priority, but that proved untrue. Let me give you an example: the USAPL received its IPF sanction in November of 1997. I was given notice that I would have to "re-qualify" for the world team. I asked if I could have a "standing total," that is, unless someone beat my original world team qualifying total, I would make the team. That was denied. I was recovering from a marathon competitive year: I had lifted in three major competitions in three months. I was told I had to re-qualify at the USAPL Nationals because I hadn't been subjected to out-of-competition drug testing. I explained that when I'd won the IPF world championships in June, I had been drug tested. I won USPF nationals in July and was drug tested. I'd won the World Games in August and I was drug tested. I had proven repeatedly that I was a drug free powerlifter. The circumstances upset me terribly; the not-so-subtle inference was that I was a drugged

lifter. The whole episode was a huge slap in my face. Making the switch to another sport was the right decision. By the way, I am frequently drug tested both in and out of competition in weightlifting.

**PLUSA:** You mentioned that you like the fact that judging is fair and equipment is a non-issue in Olympic lifting. Could you expand a bit on that?

**CB:** I like the consistency in rules and consistency in judging. I encounter this continually in weightlifting. I've been working hard for the past six years trying to equal or better top lifts done by others using the same rules as those who've gone before me. I think lifting should always include an element of integrity. Equipment and loose judging has stripped powerlifting of its integrity. Perhaps the AAU can promote RAW lifting and get powerlifting back to what it should be: a true test of strength. I bet pioneer powerlifters are rolling over in their graves; too many federations, too much dependency on equipment, what is your occupation, how tall are you, what do you weigh?

**CB:** I'm 36 years old and originally from Raymond, Maine. I'm an elementary school teacher and live in Savannah, Georgia. I'm 4'11" and weigh 128.

**PLUSA:** Could you comment on your medical condition?

**CB:** I've been diagnosed with cancer. I finished my last chemotherapy session on September 11th 2003 and I am getting my energy back. I trained through the entire cancer diagnosis and therapy. I took time off immediately after the surgery. When I resumed training I broke three world records as a master lifter and obtained my Grand Master Olympic lift certification thirteen days after my third chemo treatment. I came down with a fever as a result of the chemo; I barely had enough energy to get through the competition, but I snatched 70 kilos and clean & jerked 95 kilos. The whole thing was a terrible ordeal and truly proved that mind (power) can overcome matter.

**PLUSA:** How long do you see yourself competing as an Olympic lifter?

**CB:** As long as it remains fun.

**PLUSA:** What are your outside activities and interests?

**CB:** I love to kayak and bird watch. I love to walk my dogs.

**PLUSA:** Do you follow powerlifting at all?

**CB:** A little bit. My great friend Ann Leverett still competes. I see her almost daily. She gets Powerlifting USA and shows me articles now and then. I ask myself the question: is powerlifting a sport of strength or has it degenerated

into a sport of equipment? I can't tell anymore who is truly the strongest? The person who has the money to buy the best equipment? I would like to see powerlifting get back to basics; less gear, tighter judging, like Olympic lifting, like strongman competitions.

**PLUSA:** If you were advising youngsters interested in taking up lifting, which sport would you steer them towards: Powerlifting or Olympic lifting?

**CB:** Most definitely Olympic lifting. It has a lot to offer young athletes. If you make an international team, the federation pays your way. The only equipment you really need is shoes and a singlet. Competing doesn't require any special gear.

**PLUSA:** Any final thoughts?

**CB:** I really loved powerlifting and I miss it very much. I met a lot of wonderful people and made lots of lasting friendships. I know that nothing lasts forever, but I'm saddened by the way powerlifting has regressed. I use to be proud to say I was a powerlifter - but the more I hear and see the less I want to be affiliated with the sport. The athletes work hard to achieve their best and should be given a fair and equal chance to prove their strength. Athletes should band together and help powerlifting evolve in a positive direction.

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