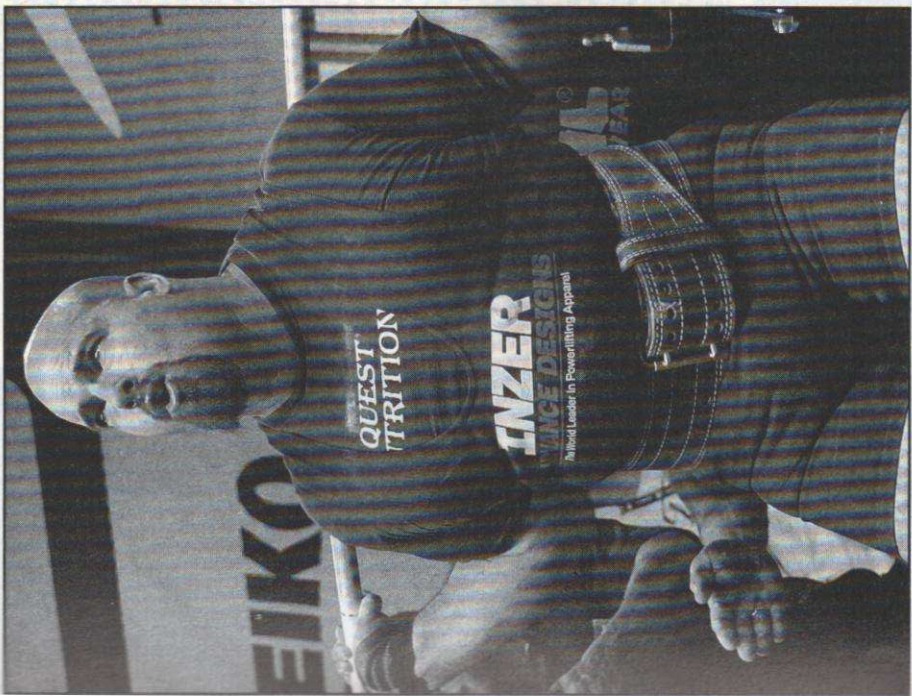


INTERVIEW

TONY CARDELLA interviewed by Larry Miller, DDS



Tony Cardella ... about to fulfill his dream on the IPE World platform

LM: Tony, let's start out with some background information. How old are you and what do you do for a living?

TC: I'm 30 years old and I work for a large technology company as a software developer in the oil and gas industry.

LM: How and when did you get started in powerlifting? Did you play sports in high school or college?

TC: I played football all four years in high school. I got started in powerlifting my senior year of high school. We didn't have a powerlifting team at my high school, but as luck would have it one of my teammates, Chip Kent, was familiar with powerlifting and told me a little about it and gave me a copy of Powerlifting USA to look at. I remember going home and telling my parents that was what I wanted to do as soon as I got

done with my senior year of football. I thought I could figure it out on my own. My dad wisely asked some of the trainers at the local YMCA (Mike and Eric Heckman) about powerlifting and who would be the right person to talk to. They hooked me up with Rob Kamman who was an experienced powerlifter in the area. Rob got me started by correcting all the bad football weightlifting habits and set me up with a training cycle for the 1995 USPF Texas State Meet. After that first meet, I was so sore and didn't want to do powerlifting anymore. A few days later, I flipped through a copy of Powerlifting USA looking for the next meet to compete in.

LM: What organizations have you competed in?

TC: I competed in the USPF from April 1995 to August 1997 and then USAPL from November 1997 till now.

LM: Why do you compete in USAPL?

TC: I became involved with USAPL through their collegiate program when I was at Texas A&M. I wanted to stay lifting in the USPF, but when Louisiana Tech switched from USPF to USAPL there was not much of a reason to stay in the USPF for collegiate powerlifting. So I switched. At first I was a little uneasy about making the switch, but I made some friends and some opportunities appeared (i.e. national level and IPF world level competitions) and I was hooked. I like the rules of performance and I think the drug testing is a good thing.

LM: What Powerlifting records do you hold?

TC: I've held both American and National Collegiate and Junior records as well as a few USAPL Texas state records in the 275 weight class. I currently hold the National Open total record. I am looking to break some American and National records in 2008.

LM: When did you start competing on the Men's open powerlifting team?

TC: I started competing on the Men's open team the same year I came out of the collegiate/junior ranks in 2001. I've been a member of the team every year since in the 275 lb. weight class.

LM: What type of an experience has that been for you?

TC: It's been a great experience for me. I think it is also what has kept me powerlifting for as long as I have. Going overseas to compete and learning from the other good lifters and coaches on the team has greatly improved my lifting. I think you can see a huge difference in a lifter when they have gone to an IPF world championship. They come back a lot more confident and smarter about their lifting. I've been able to take my experience and use it to coach other lifters. That's a rewarding experience when one of your lifters competes in their first meet successfully, breaks PRs, or wins the meet.

LM: What were your thoughts on the recent suspension of the Russians and Bulgarians from the IPF?

TC: On one hand, I'm glad to see people who are blatantly cheating getting caught and being held accountable for their actions. On the other hand, the Russians and Ukrainians are very good competitors and really push you to improve. I hope they clean up their act and come back and compete on a more level playing field with us. It was great to see more heavily contested weight classes at the 2006 IPF Men's & Women's World Powerlifting

Championships in Norway. It made the meet much more interesting and fun to watch. It's more fun to watch a deadlift battle at the end of the meet rather than a lifter just blowing out the rest of the competitors. When the gold medal is decided on a 3rd attempt deadlift, you will see just how good a lifter is and how well they are coached.

LM: Had you been suspicious about them in the past or did this tend to open your eyes a bit?

TC: I've been aware that the Russians and Ukrainians were getting caught in greater and greater numbers each year while other teams were not having problems with failing drug tests. It was not really a surprise to me. I try not to get too wrapped up in the who's on and who's not game. I think you just wind up wasting too much energy, your lifting suffers, and you can make yourself bitter about the sport. There are people and procedures in place whose job it is to run the drug testing programs. Let them focus on that, and you as a lifter focus on your lifting.

LM: I have seen you at a number of meets where you weren't lifting but very willing to help out on the platform or help lifters get into their gear. Do you enjoy this aspect of the sport?

TC: You seem to enjoy watching and helping out as much as you do lifting.

LM: Yeah, I can't seem to go to a meet and just sit and watch. I'm always spotting/loading, coaching, lifting, and occasionally they let me judge too. I like to be involved and lifters really seem to like having me spot or do hand offs. I try to put myself in the lifters shoes. I'm going to feel a lot better with an accomplished lifter spotting me. Powerlifting has a great tradition of passing on knowledge of the sport from lifter to lifter. I'm just doing my part to participate in that great tradition by passing on what I know.

LM: Who are some of the individuals you have met who have impacted you in the sport?

TC: There are a whole bunch of people who have made huge impacts on my lifting. As I mentioned before my Dad and Rob Kamman have been great in getting me started. Ed Coan, Larry Maile, and Sherman Ledford have all been instrumental in helping me get to where I am today.

LM: What do you think is in store for the future of our sport?

TC: That's a good question. I'd like to see some consolidation in powerlifting organizations, but I think we are more likely to see organizations continue to splinter and fracture until some of the people in charge of these smaller organizations cycle out of the sport. The organizations who are

doing things right, will see their numbers grow as more energetic people want to compete there and contribute to the sport.

LM: What supplements do you take?

TC: Over the last few years, Sherman Ledford has been putting together supplement plans for me. I use Quest Nutrition's BCAA Extreme, Hardcore, and JSF 5500, and Quest Whey 44.

LM: What type of training program do you follow? Do you use bands or chains?

TC: I used Ed Coan's periodization workouts for years up until 2006 when I needed to make a change because of some injuries and health problems. I've since switched over to some squat and deadlift workouts from Larry Maile that are based around 3 sets of 5s in 2-3 week waves. I think my squat workout now is tougher than Eddy's workout because of the increased volume. Eddy's deadlift workout was tougher than what I'm doing now. I do think that Eddy's workouts helped build a solid foundation to build on. I have some of my lifters use it with great success.

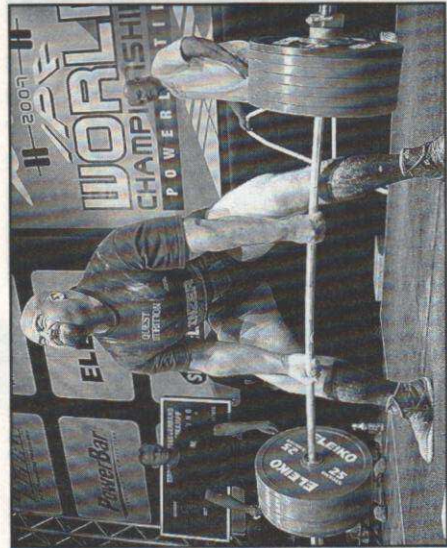
LM: For the bench press, I do a lot of board work when I am in a bench shirt, but when I'm not in a bench shirt, I like to do good old regular explosive and quick. I'm not a fan of bands and chains. I've seen too many people doing bands and chains for the wrong reasons. Most people just need to get better at the basics first.

LM: What are your thoughts on the multi-ply gear? When these individuals set PL records that well exceed what single ply lifters are doing, does it take away from them or should an asterisk be placed adjacent to those lifting in multi-ply gear?

TC: I don't care for the multi-ply gear. Don't get me wrong, I like using gear. I just think the multi-ply gear is excessive because it starts to become more about the gear and less about the athletic ability. I have used bench shirts, squat suits, and knee wraps to train through injuries several times. One of the biggest problems in powerlifting are these Top 100 lists and "all-time records". They don't take in to account the differences in rules of performance, equipment differences, and the type of judging. So when someone says they broke the all-time record in a lift they are immediately making a comparison with everyone else in the powerlifting community and that's when people get upset and start complaining. The complaining is the loudest when video of one of these "all-time" records is posted and you can actually see how bad the lift was. To me, records should be examples of how a lift is done. You should be able to take one look at the video or the lift and clearly see it was a good lift within the rules of the competition. A lot of times you see perfect examples of incredibly bad judging. If you want a better idea of how people stack up, look at the deadlifts. The numbers aren't as inflated there.

LM: What was it like winning the IPF world championships this year? What remaining goals do you have?

TC: Winning the World Powerlifting Championships has been a dream come true. It was a surreal experience. The one thing that's been really cool is the positive response from everyone, including people who I didn't expect to hear congratulations from. One of the biggest surprises was having the head coach of the Russian Powerlifting Team,



Tony's Winning Lifts ... (Christy Newman photographs)



programs is good too (who was tested, who failed, what they failed for, etc). I think there is room for improvement in the USAPL/IPF drug testing though.

LM: What advice would you have for any beginning powerlifters?

TC: First, I say a newbie should seek out powerlifters who are more experienced. Second, have a good work ethic. This sport isn't as easy as it looks and will require a lot of hard work to get better and eventually to break into the higher ranks of the sport. Third, be patient and enjoy the journey to becoming a better lifter. Getting bigger and stronger is a fun process. Fourth, know the rules of performance and your equipment inside and out. Do not be caught off guard in a meet or miss a lift because you don't know the rules. Fifth, know what is happening or have a coach keep up with your lifting as you go. This is key to placing higher in a competition. If you can't win that day, place as high as possible.

LM: Tony, do you incorporate any special assistance exercises into your training program? In other words do you have any training secrets you'd like to share?

TC: I don't really have any special exercises that I do. I think the secret is knowing when to rotate exercises to help improve your lifting. Lately, I've been getting a lot of mileage out of improving my flexibility by stretching and some movement prep exercises.

LM: Who are some of your favorite lifters to watch?

TC: I like to watch the lifters who compete at the IPF World Championships, USAPL Nationals, Team Quest lifters, Texas A&M National lifters.

Powerlifting team members, anybody I know competing, any lifter who is coming out of the junior ranks in my weight class, but I think watching lifters that I coach is the most satisfying. When you are watching a lifter you coach lift, it's almost like you are out there with them because you've spent time helping them prepare for the competition. There are some amazing lifters out there to watch lift like Ed Coan, Kirk Karuowski, Brad Gillingham, Brian Siders, and many others.

LM: Tony, any final thoughts or individuals you'd like to thank?

TC: I think lifters should keep powerlifting as long as it is fun for them. There are some workouts and moments that are not fun, but on the whole the experience needs to be enjoyable. We don't do this for a living. Seek out competitions at a higher level if you have the means. We don't get better if we don't push ourselves to improve. It's easy to be a big fish in a small pond. Lifters should also take time to spot, load, judge, or work as other meet help. This will encourage other people to help out because you are leading by example. I'd like to thank everyone who has had an impact on my lifting over the years. Whether you've spotted me, taught me how to lift, helped put me back together, coached me, helped me get to a meet when I couldn't go alone, or just took a small amount of time to encourage me I want to say thank you. Without all of your help, this would not be possible. Last and certainly not least, thanks to my girlfriend Christy Newman for putting up with me while I'm going through a training cycle. I'm not always the easiest person to be around when I'm cutting weight or dealing with sore muscles, but she handles it like the champ she is.

Vladimir Bogachev, come up to me to shake my hand and get a picture with me. It's been a trip to not be able to walk 3 feet through the venue at Worlds without someone saying congratulations, wanting to shake my hand, buy me a drink, or get a picture. I'm not used to all that attention. Now things are going to get harder. I've won one world championship and that's great, but can I do it again? As far as other goals go, I'd love to break the American and World deadlift records. I'm not that far off of those records. Jon Kuc holds the American deadlift record and it would be a pretty big accomplishment to break a record held by a legend like Kuc. I'm working on getting my bench press back on track. I need to get back to hitting 280+ kg benches consistently again. I'm also encouraged by the recent gains in my squat. I'm hitting pretty good numbers, but there always seems to be considerably more in the tank. 400+ kg is possible within a year. There is a lot of hard work and training between now and then. The plan is to keep pushing as long as I can until I'm no longer having fun in the sport.

LM: What are your thoughts about our drug testing in the USAPL and the IPF?

TC: I think drug testing is a positive thing in our sport. I don't fall into the hardcore drug free crowd. By that I mean that I put powerlifting first and the drug testing second. We need to remember that powerlifting is about powerlifting first and foremost. Getting sucked into the "He beat me because he's on drugs" game is a good way to turn powerlifting into a negative experience for yourself because there is always someone out there who is stronger than you or who will break your records. Transparency in the drug testing