

# INTERVIEW

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

## Robert DeCourt

as interviewed for PL USA by Brian Blum



1995 IPF World Champ in the Bench Press at 181, Robert DeCourt

**BB:** Could you give us some personal information about yourself?

**RD:** I'm 32 years old, five foot eight, compete at 181. I own a construction company and a home and building inspection company in San Diego.

**BB:** What is your marital status?

**RD:** I'm married to a beautiful wife whom I met at the championships in Finland in 1994.

**BB:** Is she a powerlifter also?

**RD:** She placed 2nd in the Nationals last year and hopefully this year too (Note: Marta DeCourt won first place in the 114 pound class at the 1996 USPF Bench Press Nationals). She is also the Hawaiian state champion in the bench press.

**BB:** How did you get started in powerlifting?

**RD:** I just noticed I was stronger than everybody in high school. I had the high school bench record. I started lifting weights when I was fifteen and I liked to bench press. I just benched all the time and got stronger than everyone else my size. I was weighing 146 pounds and I could bench 285 at sixteen years old. I never really pursued lifting until I was about 23 or 24. Then I went to a competition and came in second. I was determined to go back the next year and win so I trained hard all year and I won. I broke the meet record and

it has been like... I don't know how to explain it. Ever since then I couldn't stop. It was just like a desire to be the strongest.

**BB:** How long have you been lifting and competing?

**RD:** After my first year of lifting I hooked up with Jim Merlino, he's a world class lifter in the 181 pound class. He is a grand master now but he took me under his wing and trained me for eight years and made me the lifter I am, perfecting my technique and skill. Jim holds the USPF masters bench record in the 181 pound class.

**BB:** How did you get involved with the USPF?

**RD:** Through Jim Merlino. He brought me to a real federation and I've been here for eight years.

**BB:** What are your views on drug usage and testing?

**RD:** I don't condone any drug use. As far as the testing, I'm happy with the testing they do.

**BB:** Do you use any special supplements or follow a special diet?

**RD:** I quit smoking just before the

Worlds last year. I won the World Championship and I got married and I tell you I've put on so much weight. I just got fat and lazy, my training has been terrible. I've been just really happy and comfortable. I've done it all, I've become World Champion, I married a beautiful woman, she makes me happy. I just kind of got lazy with my

lifting. Now with the new rule change - I'm a thumbless gripper - I have to either retire or convert, so I'm going to take the next two years and try and convert my grip so that I can compete again.

**BB:** Will you compete during those two years?

**RD:** I don't know, maybe. I might do Inzer's meet if he invites me again because I don't need a thumb grip there.

**BB:** Does the thumbless grip make that much difference to your lift?

**RD:** To me it does, it makes all the difference in the world. I've built too much meat in my thumb area where I can't hold the bar comfortably in my hand. It shifts all the weight onto one of my bones and it's very difficult.

**BB:** What are your future goals in powerlifting?

**RD:** Well, the way I'm gaining weight I see myself going up a weight class. I'm going to probably hit the 198s, maybe the 220s, I don't know if my wife will let me get that fat. I hope to hit a 550 at

198 and who knows where I can go from there.

**BB:** What are your best lifts in competition and training?

**RD:** My best lift in competition would have been a 515 at 165 on April 3rd, 1993 in Fresno, California. My best lift at 181 was 500 pounds at Inzer's meet. In the gym I've hit 530.

**BB:** What do you see as the future of powerlifting?

**RD:** I see a bright future for it. I don't know if it will ever be unified, but we are going to do something to try to get it into the Olympics, just to show the public that it is a popular sport. We are going to go to Atlanta and do something when the Olympics are going on, to promote powerlifting.

**BB:** Are you going there as part of a USPF team?

**RD:** Yeah, myself and Lee Rorie have committed to doing something to the effect of a bench and weights on a flatbed truck in the parking lot and loudspeakers or something. We don't know what but we are going to do something just to make our voices heard and let the public know that we're out here and that we're more exciting than Olympic weightlifting.

**BB:** Give us a breakdown of your training.

**RD:** I do a couple of training routines. I do one percentage train-

ing routine that was Kenny Lain's routine. Then I do the old fashioned five sets of five. That's my other one.

**BB:** What advice do you have for beginners?

**RD:** Do five sets of five, train hard, stay clean, and you'll have a long career.

**BB:** What do you think of John Inzer's Greatest Bench Press in America?

**RD:** I think it was a great show. It got the greatest bench pressers in America together and I think it did a lot for the sport. I think that is what we all need to do as lifters is try and get it more in the public's eye and make it a little more exciting so it will pay off for us in the long run.

**BB:** Have you had any injuries?

**RD:** I've had a few. I tore my collarbone out in 1990. In '91 I cut my thumb off on the job. These injuries took me time to recover from. Since then I've been plagued with small shoulder injuries. It goes from one side to the other, one side to the other. Nothing real serious, thank God for that.

**BB:** Are there any competitors you respect or people who have helped you out in the sport?

**RD:** I respect all of them. Powerlifting is like a second family. The people are real good people. I enjoy the competition, the national

competition because you get to meet more people, the world competition because you get to meet people from all over the world. I have friends all over the world from the three years that I went to the World Championships and it has just enriched my life a great deal.

**BB:** Are there any other comments you would like to make?

**RD:** I'm a real small boned person and with the size I am, I'm pretty much, I believe, at my limits. It is going to take me, like I said, maybe into the 198s so I can go 550. I will see what my bones will handle.

**BB:** Is there anybody you want to thank?

**RD:** Jim Merlino and my wife Marta. And I want to urge any lifters that win in their area to let the newspapers know that they won, if it's just a state meet, a national meet or whatever just so that more people are aware of the sport and maybe it will bring more spectators and someday bring money into the sport.