

INTERVIEW

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

WADE HOOPER as interviewed for PL USA by Larry Miller



LM: Alright Wade, how about some background information about yourself?
WH: My name is Wade Hooper, I am 29 years old. I am a strength coach at West Ouachita High School in West Monroe, Louisiana. I am single and have been competing for 11 years and lifting for 17 years.

LM: How did you get involved in the sport of Powerlifting?

WH: I got involved in high school. It was popular in the rival high schools around the area and I was one of two members of our school's powerlifting team.

LM: Did you play any sports in high school?

WH: I played football and swim. My dad was a swim coach.

LM: How long have you been a strength coach?

WH: About 4 years now.

LM: What records do you currently have or have had in the past?

WH: I formerly held the IPF Men's open world squat record at 672 lbs., and still hold the Junior world record of 644 lbs at 148. I have won 2 USPF National Championships and 3 USAPL National Championships. I have won an open (1996) and Junior (1992) world championship. My biggest accomplishment in the sport to date was the 1996 worlds in Salzburg, Austria.

LM: What kind of experience has it been competing on a US team going to the worlds as opposed to competing individually?

WH: It is different every year as the feel of the team changes because you have one or two new members every year. It is a lot more fun being a part of the U.S. team, as opposed to lifting individually.

This will be the 6th U.S. team that I have had the honor to be a part of, and although the faces have changed somewhat over the years, the goal of the team is the same - bringing home the team title.

LM: Do you personally feel that when we send a team to the worlds we should send our individual national champions or should we field a team that has the best chance to win us a world championship?

WH: Well, being a coach and a lifter I can see two different scenarios. As a coach, you want to field the best possible team, however it falls. If you have 2 great lifters in one weight class, then those two go and you eliminate the weak link from the nationals. This will give the team a better chance

Wade was re-instated in time to lift at the USAPL Men's Nationals.

with my training. My workout partner Jeff Douglas is one of the guys I respect the most. He and I have been training partners for the last 8 years, and Jeff has played a big role in my personal success as a lifter.

LM: What remaining goals do you have?

WH: I would like to win another world title and after that I am not sure. Maybe win a little bit more money at the WPO and go back and compete at the Mountaineer Cup.

LM: What equipment do you use?

WH: For squatting and deadlifting, I use the Centurian from Titan. For benching, I use the Crain Mega Power Bench shirt. I also use the Inzer and am playing around with both to see which is the best for me.

LM: Since you brought up the point about making money, let's discuss whether or not amateur athletes should be allowed to make money. We spent quite a bit of time trying to reinstate you and the other two lifters who won money at the WPO meet in Florida.

WH: I really think that this was one of those situations that could make or break an organization. I am still trying to figure out the difference between an amateur and professional in today's world. Times

have changed and I think that USA Powerlifting finally realized it. I think that USAPL will be making some changes in the right direction. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Larry, and all of the NGB members who stood up and supported Tony Caprari, Beau Moore and myself on this issue.

LM: Was it your decision to lift at those meets based on some of our athletes going to Sweden and competing for prize money?

WH: Yes, based on the fact that some of our lifters had recently competed for and won prize money. I assumed that I could do the same. I didn't see it as an issue and I had no idea it was addressed in our by-laws.

LM: I imagine it was quite an experience for you to go through the system and have the decision reversed.

WH: No one really wins in this situation. It had to be played out. At least now the members have more opportunity to offset their expenses in this sport as a result of this issue.

LM: Were you happy with the final result?

WH: Yes, of course, I was allowed to lift.

LM: What type of training program are you on?

WH: I train 4 days a week: Sunday - Squat and legs; Tuesday - Bench; Thursday - Deadlift and Friday - Light Bench and Triceps.

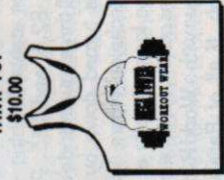
LM: What type of diet do you follow and what supplements do you take?

WH: Well, moving up to the 165s has really spoiled me on dieting. I don't have to watch what I eat right now. However, I still try to keep my protein intake to about 120-150 grams/day. I would say that my nutritional breakdown is 50-30-20, carbs, protein and fats. As far as supplements are concerned, Quest Nutrition supplies me with products that best suit my nutritional needs. I take Quest Creatine, Synergy, Whey protein and pyruvate.

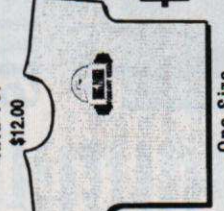
LM: What are your views on lifters taking steroids and how do you think we can improve our drug testing?

WH: That would depend on what organization the lifter is competing in. I lift in organization(s) that do have rules against steroid use - the USA PL and IPF. However, that does not stop lifters from competing in the USA PL or the IPF and being loaded. It is kind of hard to test a lifter once or twice a year

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and catching them, if they know when and where they will be tested. OMT is the only way to catch these lifters breaking the rules. I also think that every lifter should have a chance at getting tested throughout the year, not just the national championships.

LM: What are your views on the triple ply suits and shirts? Do you think these things are making a mockery of our sport?

WH: Last I checked, this was a strength sport. The goal is for the individual to lift as much weight as

they can on their own and not have the equipment do it for them. I like equipment and think that equipment should be a part of the sport for safety considerations. However, literally does the work for you, what have you accomplished? With equipment, there comes a point that we must say, enough is enough. I personally think that single ply needs to be the standard in all organizations.

LM: Can you think of any funny powerlifting situations that you've encountered over the years?

WH: I have told this story plenty of times, but it still remains the highlight of my funniest and most embarrassing moments in this sport. This story dates back to when I was lifting for the Louisiana Tech Powerlifting Team. I was doing a squat exhibition for the team during halftime of the Lady Techsters play-off game. Well, I did more than exhibit proper technique on the squat that day. Standing at half court, my squat suit blew out on my third rep. I was only wearing a jock and had

to walk off from center court, barring all of myself, literally.

LM: Are there any final comments you would like to make Wade?

WH: I would like to personally thank Dr. Taiton for all his help and support over the years. I could never forget my training partners Jeff Douglas, Keith Taylor, Jackie, and Char Gahagan. Without their help, I could never have come close to the level I am at today. I also have to give credit to my girlfriend Kim, who keeps calm and focused at meets.

On May 20, 2000 Wade Hooper competed in the WPO Championships in Daytona Beach, Florida. Wade took home with him \$7,000.00 for his outstanding performance. Immediately following, there was a great deal of discussion as to whether or not Wade had violated his amateur status as a member of USA PL. At the time Wade's logic was that two fellow USA PL lifters, Brad Gillingham and Sean Culnan had competed for prize money in Sweden. Wade concluded that it would be all right for him to do the same. Because of the controversy going around on the internet, the EC of USA PL addressed the situation. They voted 6-0 to suspend Wade per some specific sections of our By-Laws. I think that, as a whole, the EC did not want to suspend Wade. Current practices allow a vast majority of Olympic athletes to make money. I called Wade and asked him if he needed any help. Wade indicated that he would take whatever help he could get. I contacted a few members of the Executive Committee. I wanted to know if we were supposed to be following USOC guidelines. One member thought we were to be following USOC guidelines for drug testing only. Having been a past EC member, I was uncertain as to what we were supposed to be doing so I contacted my friend Andrea Sortwell past Secretary/Treasurer of USA PL. Andrea keeps every thing on file and has a great memory. Andrea referred me to our March 1st, 1997 meeting in Chicago where by we were to attempt some sort of merger with the USPF. Although the merger did not go through, we adopted a number of changes. Motion #13 which passed by a vote of 27-0, was to authorize our Law and Legislative Committee to adopt the USOC definitions and to bring our By-Laws into conformity with those of the USOC. This was never done. After reviewing our By-Laws very carefully, I concluded that we were directed by our By-Laws and the March 1st motion to follow USOC guidelines. I therefore contacted two higher-ups within the USOC. Both were surprised that we did not allow our athletes to win money. They also referred me to the USOC constitution, By-Laws and the Ted Stevens Amateur Act. From what was told to me by the USOC and from what I read, our National organization could not be more restrictive than that of the international organization regarding membership. Therefore, if the IPF was not penalizing their athletes for winning money, USA PL would have to follow their lead. This was the path Wade decided to take. Upon a close review of our own By-Laws, Wade and I noticed a number of inconsistencies. One was to the reference of our athletes being members. At the time of the WPO meet,

Wade was not a member of USA PL. I felt that the section of our By-Laws which the EC used to suspend Wade would potentially penalize athletes that received free equipment from some of the equipment and clothing manufacturers. In all sincerity, I felt that had our Law and Legislative Committee followed through in March of 1997, we could have avoided this whole mess. I also felt that the athlete should not be penalized due to the organization not following through. Unfortunately this happens and as a past EC member, I am as guilty as anyone else. It is difficult to keep track of every motion that was ever passed within our organization. At the USA PL Nationals this past July when Wade was reinstated, current Law and Legislative Committee chairman, Lucian Gillis stood up and took the blame. I don't think that Lucian was the chair of that committee in March of 1997, but since our current By-Laws had addressed the issue of following USOC guidelines Lucian indicated that he was unaware of an urgent need to change our laws. I have a great deal of respect for Lucian to get up and say what he did since he was putting Wade's interests ahead of his own.

I was hoping that the EC would review their decision based on the information that Wade and I had sent to them prior to our July NCB meeting. I did not feel that we would be able to change any By-Laws but only reverse the decision of the EC. As per our By-Laws, the EC suspended the meeting so that they could hold a special meeting at which time they arrived at a solution that would allow Wade and the two other lifters, Beau Moore and Tony Caprari to compete for 2 months until they could review if the IPF was officially allowing it's athletes to compete for money.

I think that there are a few morals to this story. One, before we suspend an athlete, the situation should be very thoroughly investigated. A great majority of our athletes and many members of our EC do not know every rule as outlined within our By-Laws. If we have rules to inform the athlete, whether it be via our miniature rule book or a newsletter or some other means. We also need to get with the times. By bringing prize money into the sport, we may attract more athletes and sponsors. The only negative would be that it might attract more drug use.

It was nice to see Wade compete at the Nationals. He is a great lifter and just as nice an individual.

LARRY MILLER