

INTERVIEW

ROB LUYANDO

interviewed by Ben Tatar of Critical Bench

Rob Luyando has been a recent record holder in three different weight classes. He has bench pressed 832 at 220, 905 at 242 and 948 at 275! Let's meet the man who has dominated three different weight divisions in modern day bench pressing, Rob Luyando!

Critical Bench: Rob, welcome to Powerlifting USA. Tell us about yourself.

Rob Luyando: I'm 38 years old, married with 3 children and I reside in Illinois. I have been playing with weights ever since high school.

CB: Rob, what is your height and weight? What is the most you have benched in different weight classes? What feds do you compete in?

RL: I am 5'8-5'9 on a good day. My weight currently is 270ish, but I fluctuate depending on what my goals are. My best bench at 220 is 832, 242 is 905, 275 is 947, and 308 is 914. I have competed in several federations over the years. I will go where the competition and money can be found—mostly UPA & APF. I usually pick my meets based on who the meet director is, not the federation.

CB: You are dominant in every weight division you compete in. Give us your training routine!

RL: Monday I do legs. Tuesday I do Lockout, Speed Bench and tricep assistance work. Wednesday

I do deadlift and back assistance work. Thursdays it's shoulders and traps. On Fridays I do biceps, forearm and wrist work. On Saturday it's heavy benching and chest assistance work. Sunday is strictly relaxing with family. I also try to throw in cardio at least 30 minutes 3 times a week.

CB: What do you think are the 10 most important things when it comes to building a bigger bench?

- RL:** 10 most important things:
1. Mental toughness
 2. Training environment
 3. Loyal training partners
 4. Dedication
 5. Living in a shirt
 6. Heavy raw lockout work
 7. Speed work
 8. Proper nutrition and sleep
 9. Coaching
 10. Finding the best equipment that will suit your style

CB: Everyone, write these tips down, apply them, and you will be on the path for a super-human like

bench press! Rob, do you do overhead presses when you're trying to build a bigger bench?

RL: I throw in overhead barbell presses for 5 sets of 5 when my front delts need extra work. I use dumbbells when I feel the need to strengthen my stabilizers.

CB: Do you train heavy on your assistance work?

RL: I pretty much train as heavy as I can with all of my assistance work.

CB: What are your favorite bench press assistance exercises?

RL: I love doing lockouts with 4 and 5 boards with either straight weight or heavy band tension for reps of three.

CB: What was it like winning the Arnold twice?

RL: I won the Arnold two times and both were great experiences.

CB: Do you like competing in normal meets more or big meets?

RL: I feed off of the crowd's energy whether I'm at a big meet or a smaller state meet. I have had some of my best battles at state meets though.

CB: What was it like when you set a world record? Was it like you

thought it would be? How did you celebrate?

RL: I won the Mendy Classic Several State level Bench Bash for Cash meets WPO Bench Bash for Cash, WPO Ukraine Pro meet. My first world record was cool and each one after that was just something I expected of myself. Each time I broke an all-time record it was an awesome high. I celebrated by pretty much hanging out with my good friends after the meets.

CB: What has been your favorite moment in powerlifting and what has been your least favorite?

RL: My favorite moments would have to be the kick ass people you meet in and around the sport. My least favorite moments would have to be all the jealousy and internet B.S. you have to deal with all the time.

CB: Do you think the net has been mostly a positive thing for powerlifting or a negative thing?

RL: It can be a great tool for acquiring knowledge and promoting the sport, but unfortunately a lot of the forum trash brings it down.

CB: Before you benched 948 lbs. what was going on through your head?

RL: 1000 lbs. The meet I hit the 948 I went through hell for three weeks prior and it really messed up my training and nutrition for that meet. 948 was my opener. I

was on track for something big that meet, but sometimes life gets in the way.

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Strong like Daddy – Rob Luyando with his four year old son, Hunter

CB: Oh, so your unbelievable 948 lb. bench was a letdown for you since you wanted to hit and expected to hit 1000 lbs. that day?

RL: Yeah, I was on track for 1000 lbs., but work got crazy busy and I was lucky to get in the gym once a week and get more than 3 hrs. of sleep a night. It took a toll on my body, but my head was in the right place. As for goals, 1000 lbs. will make me happy and then who knows, maybe even a full meet.

CB: Have most of the people in powerlifting been nice to you? Did you experience more jealousy as you got better?

RL: Not really, because everyone I associate with in the sport are cool people.

CB: What do you say to people who are jealous of you?

RL: If someone wants to be jealous of my accomplishments I would just suggest that they work harder.

CB: So, when you set records in the bench press you didn't feel shocked?

RL: Shocked? No, I knew what I was capable of—it really felt no better than meeting your goals and being on top of your game.

CB: How does your family feel about your powerlifting success and the fact that you are the best in the world right now?

RL: My wife and kids have sacrificed a lot for my success. However, they have always been supportive and understanding. It's just 'Dad's hobby' is the way the kids look at it. Some guys fish—I choose to bench.

CB: Great view. Do you want your kids to break your record?

RL: I have two girls and powerlifting isn't in their top 10 list of things to do. My boy is 4. I would be lying if I didn't say I want to see him smash the old man's records, but what ever he chooses to do in life I will respect and support him.

CB: I am sure you get asked the question "how much do you bench press!" Do you tell them 948 lbs. in a contest with more in the tank? (Haha.)

RL: Every lifter is asked how much he benches. I just reply, "Not enough." Over the years I have trained with a lot of average everyday lifters and a lot of knowledgeable lifters and coaches. I would prefer to be surrounded by the best, but it doesn't always work out that way.

CB: What do you think makes for a great training partner?

RL: Dedication, loyalty, and sharing the same desire to be the best. Bill Carpenter and Jeremy Frey

have been two of my best partners/coaches over the years.

A competitive nature is also important too, I guess. Who trains to be 2nd best?

CB: Rob, we see you setting records. However, were you always very strong?

RL: I have always worked hard. I never thought of myself as being super strong, just a hard worker. I set goals and bust my ass to surpass them. I did that even as a kid.

CB: Even though you are the best, you never say it and you just see yourself as a hard worker. Very healthy perspective that keeps you humble, well rounded, and probably better than if you ever saw yourself as the best. Tell us something about you that the powerlifting world doesn't know?

RL: I am really a nice guy. LOL! I don't think I have any secrets.

CB: You have heard a lot of tips over the years. What is the best and worst advice that you were ever told?

RL: Advice can be bad or good—it's all how you interpret it. Kennelly has given me some great advice on handling crazy weights. Jeff McVicar has given me some great advice on nutrition and cutting weight. It all paid off, but I hated Jeff during the entire time I was making the cut. LOL!

CB: How do you see the future of powerlifting? Do you think it will go mainstream?

RL: I would love to see Powerlifting go mainstream, but I don't think we will ever see it. There's just too much bickering, too many federations. Oh, and freaks will continue to climb out of the woodwork.

CB: As long as there are normal good lifters who are stronger than gym lifters and freaks, powerlifting will always be a sport that will be respected in some way. Today Rob, we know you're a great bench, but do you remember the days when a 225 lb. bench press was hard?

RL: Man, you had to go there. I was a freshman in high school and I was trying to keep up with the seniors. The football coach loaded 225 on the bench and it crushed me and the coach left it there for a while.

CB: Did that experience motivate you to bench more or did it make you afraid to try 225 lbs. again?

RL: No, I wasn't scared. I hit 225 a month later.

CB: When did you discover powerlifting?

RL: I did my first APF meet in 2003. Bill Carpenter was the meet director and the 242 all-time world record holder at the time. Big Iron Gym was in the house

and I was in awe.

CB: What have been your most hardcore, craziest, funniest, and change-inspiring moments that you have had so far during your powerlifting journey?

RL: My most Hardcore Moment is hard to say. I did some crazy dieting techniques to make weight and then had to put it back on.

The Funniest Moment was the 1st time I handled 700 lbs. I literally (bleeped) my pants.

My Craziest Moment happened when I was competing in the Ukraine and the way we were treated like rock stars. The rock star treatment was awesome. Everywhere we went people were asking for pictures and autographs. The majority of the people had no clue who we were or why we were there, but we stood out in the crowd. That was enough for them.

My most Changed Moment happened during my first real test in competition and the first time I hit a 700 plus bench. I went head-to-head with my good friend and fellow bench freak Brad Hein. He had placed 2nd at the Arnold just prior to this meet and I was still dreaming of making it to the pro level. We went head-to-head at the Big Iron meet and I squeaked it out with record breaker plates. From that point on I pretty much had my game face in check.

CB: Is there anything that any of your competitive powerlifter friends have said to you that really stuck with you?

RL: Probably the most recent thing that comes to mind was my last big meet when I hit the 948. I missed my first and second attempt and one of my best friends, Paul Key, came up to me and told me I had to find my heart and bring it out for the last attempt. I don't remember his exact words, but I remember having chills and then taking the platform spitting fire.

CB: Did it work?

RL: I walked away with a 948 in the record books, so I would say it did.

CB: What has been your favorite moment in your powerlifting journey?

RL: My favorite moment was my second win at the Arnold Classic. I hit an 832 at 242 at that meet. I went 3 for 3 and right before I took to the platform, Kennelly told me it was time for the 'Rob & Ryan' show. I idolized his accomplishments, so it was pretty cool for me.

CB: What did you weigh in for the UPA bench for cash? List your records one more time.

RL: I weighed in at 258 for the

UPA Bench Bash for cash. My records are: 948 at 275, 832 at 220, 905 at 242, 948 at 275, and 914 at 308.

CB: Now tell us, which record are you the most proud of? Which one was the hardest to attain?

RL: I'm most proud of all of them because they all had different challenges. The hardest to attain was the 220 record. That one required the most discipline with extensive dieting involved.

CB: What is your focus now?

RL: Right now my focus is on being the first 275 pounder to hit a grand. After that, I will see how I feel.

CB: How do you want to be perceived as a bench presser?

RL: I want to be perceived as being one of the best in the sport.

CB: Who do you think is the most overlooked bench in the game?

RL: Brad Heck is the most overlooked bench in the sport. He has been super consistent and crazy strong for a long time. In my eyes, he is one of the best.

CB: What do you do away from powerlifting?

RL: When I'm not powerlifting, I spend as much time as possible with my son, Hunter—that kid is a trip!

CB: Well, Rob it has been great talking to you. You have made an impact on the sport and we can't wait to see what show you will put on for all of us down the road! In closing, who would you like to thank?

RL: I would like to thank my wife Shellie, and my kids first and foremost for all they put up with.

Also, my training partners Jeremy Frey, Bill Carpenter, Dave Jansen, Shane Oltmans and my inspirational mentors Big Iron Gym, Ryan Kennelly, Jeff McVicar, and Dick Zenzen.

Lastly, I'd also like to thank my sponsors MHP (GetMHP.com), Overkill Strength Equipment, and Super Training Gym. Without all these people involved in my training, my success would not be possible.



Big Bench Presser, Rob Luyando