

# INTERVIEW

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

**ML:** You take particular pride in bench pressing in a single thickness shirt. How much have you benched in that type of equipment, and have you done anything with the double thickness. How much have you benched without a shirt?

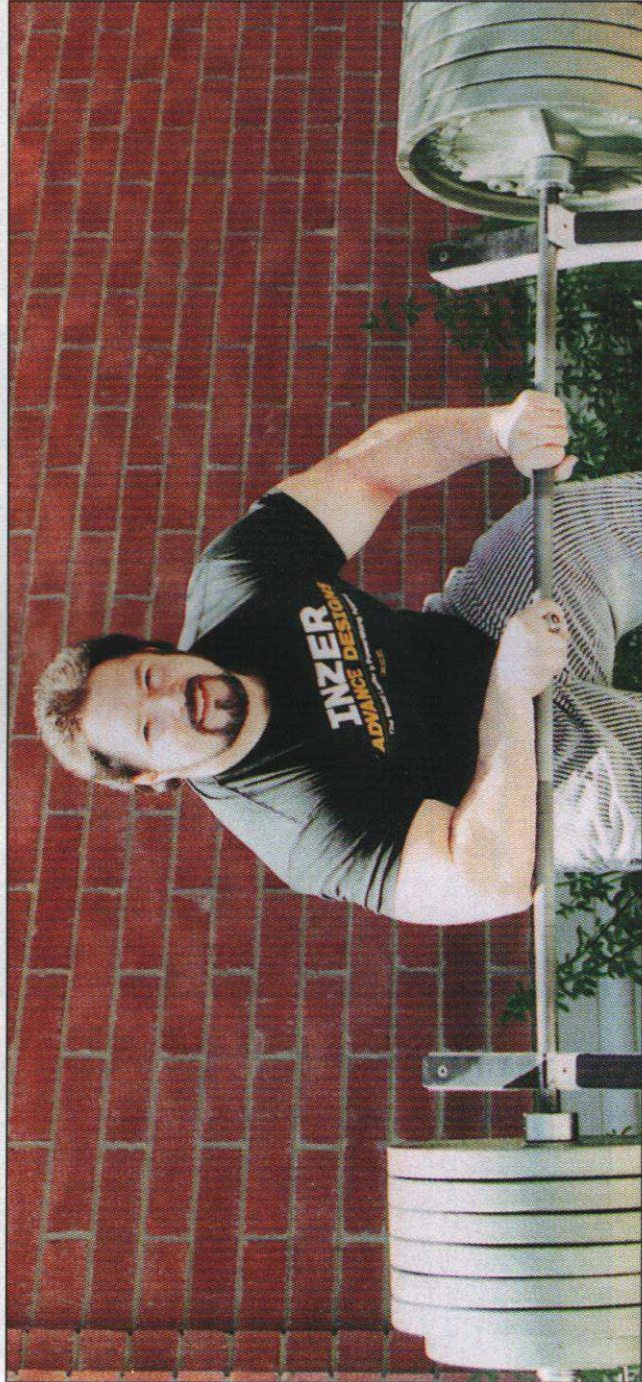
**TM:** I've done as much as 610 lbs. without a shirt on, but that was without a pause. With a pause, I'm not too far from that. I had not been exposed to lifting in a double ply shirt until last year. Throughout pretty much my entire career, I've been lifting with a single ply shirt, and up until last year I had been using, pretty much, the polyester shirts. This year I've switched to denim. Tim Isaac, here in Phoenix, actually taught me how to use a shirt, as I was a novice on how to use the denim. About this time last year, I was getting ready to lift in Gus's federation (WABDL) for the first time and in doing so I recognized that he allows the double ply shirts. I started to train with them at that time, and competed in two events, not knowing too much about how to use the shirt. After the first of the year, Tim showed me how to use it to my advantage. First of all, I was wearing a shirt that was a little too big for me. I had Jason over at Inzer's tweak me out a shirt that was cut a little bit smaller than the one I had normally been wearing. That seemed to do the trick, because just by making the shirt smaller, it did

things. One major difference are rules and regulations. Of course, that's what keeps our sport from advancing into something that has continuity. I don't know if this has any effect on whether the Olympic Committee is taking us seriously, due to so much segregation amongst federations, based on what they believe to be the right or wrong way to do something. Then again, we are looking at a free enterprise system, and everybody feels that their way is a better way or the right way. Every federation I compete with has its pros and cons. Another difference is equipment. People say "look - that guy is doing X pounds in this federation, but he is wearing what we would consider to be illegal equipment, based on what we do". I don't blame them. You can get to the point where you have to ask if it's the person lifting the weight, or is it the equipment? The fact of the matter is, if all the big benchers in the world are utilizing this equipment to their advantage, we have to get on equal playing ground. If I'm very, very close to a 700 lift on a 4th attempt, I've actually done as much as 726 in the gym.

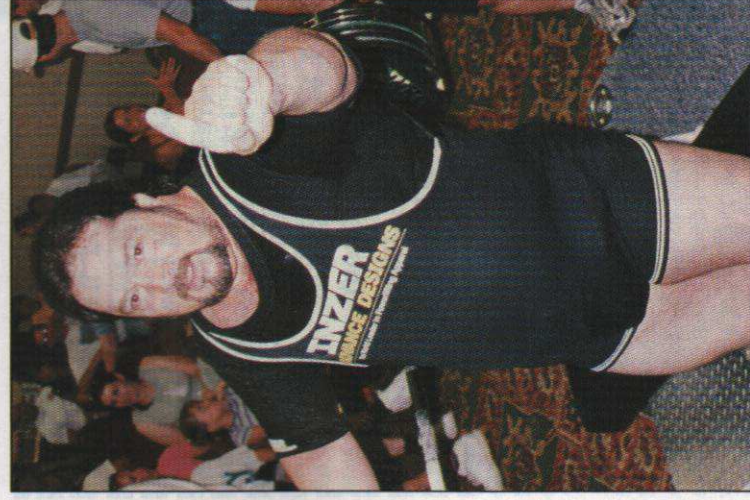
**ML:** You've lifted in various organizations. How do you compare them, one to another, in your mind. Are there major differences between WABDL, NASA, and whoever else you have lifted with?

**TM:** Obviously, there are quite a few differences between the federations. I've never used a triple ply

if you tweak the double ply too tight, it will be too hard to bring the bar down to your chest, and if you wear a single ply shirt that tight, the shirt will blow out on you, because you're not getting as much support from the material. At the NASA Arizona State meet, I blew out two shirts in one meet because of that, which was kind of unheard of. At the World Cup, I had several different sizes, so I could get into a shirt where I wouldn't have to worry about a blow out. My best with a double ply shirt is 672 (Editor's Note: this was increased to 678 at Kieran Kidder's Bench Bash for Cash, subsequent to this interview). Of course, I have done over 700 in the gym, several times now. On the day, I did 672 in a contest, I came very, very close to a 700 lift on a 4th attempt. I've actually done as much as 726 in the gym.



Tom Manno has been bench pressing for 33 years and he played football, up to the pro ranks, for 17 years. (Dwight Bennett photograph)



Will Tom become the first 40+ man to bench 700?

shirt, so I don't know what kind of advantage that gives you. I've heard pros and cons on that too, stating that it's almost "too much" support, where you really have a hard time getting the weight down to your chest.

You also have your personalities in the different federations. I get along with just about everybody, that's my nature. I've had difficulties at times, but I've learned how to wade through them, and turn a negative situation into a positive. When you go into a different federation, you're fighting a political agenda, which is understandable. If you go into a new federation, and you're establishing a new American or World record in that federation, and not that many people know who you are, they're going to make life a little bit difficult on you. The primary reason for that is that the record you are breaking might belong to someone who has been with that federation for many years and has shown a lot of loyalty to that federation and the people involved. For my part, I might break that record and never come back. What I'm trying to do now is establish loyalty in virtually all the federations I compete in. I've had a lot of success in all the federations I've competed in.

**ML:** Tell us about your supplement program.

**TM:** Well, I am actually coming out with my own line soon. It's going to be called Tom Manno's Pro Gram, which consists of virtually everything I've been taking for the last several years. First of all, I believe in taking a good protein powder. When I say good, I mean something that is very, very low in sugar. Of course, there's no problem with having a fructose sugar in it, but that's a simple sugar. You want to stay away from other forms of sugars. Obviously, you want something that tastes good and is user-friendly, that mixes well... like a Pro-Blend 55, that I've been taking over the years, which has a high protein content. I want something of that nature in what I'm developing. It also has to possess all 22 amino acids, both the essential and non-essential. People

can't get over the fact that I'm lifting what I'm lifting, on an on-going basis - day in, day out - year in, year out - and that I enter as many meets as I do - without getting hurt. I always tell people that the basic philosophy that I have involves two words that will help you in any sport. The first word is hydration. The second word is anti-inflammation. If you can do everything you can do, on a day to day basis, to take care of those issues in your body, you should have a long and healthy career. I also tell people that I believe in the three Rs - Rest, Rest, and Rest. This is a sport where less is better. When I say hydration - you have your creatine monohydrate, you have your glutamine, you have your ribose - which helps volumize the cells of the muscle, and along with that people have to be cognizant of taking in a lot of water. When you take these products, if you're not drinking a lot of water, you're going to be pulling water out of other parts of the body, and that will actually dehydrate you. On top of that, I take a good digestive enzyme, like the one in the Power Pack from Nutri-Fun. I've got Gus on these digestive enzymes also, and he loves them. If you're trying to find ways to combat steroid usage and get the body to become anabolic much faster, a great digestive enzyme is the way to go. Protein is the building block of the body, and it only makes sense to use those blocks more effectively and more efficiently to break down and assimilate most of the protein you're taking in. My wife is a breast cancer survivor and this product also enhances your immune system. She was taking megadoses of the stuff and it helped her tremendously. If someone tells you to take 70 grams of protein, to help you become anabolic right after you work out, that's all well and good, but if you're not assimilating that 70 grams properly, you're still going to be catabolic. If you do take a good digestive enzyme, you're more likely to become anabolic, faster. I also take anti-oxidants, strong ones, like Ester C. I take a good Cal-Mag formula. It's important to take supplements right after they work out. They're not allowing their recovery to be expedited. I take a product to increase glycogen storage, and also helps the amino acid transport system. I've been a national spokesman for Nutri-Fun for about 3 1/2 years now. We all took a leave of absence from the company for about a year during a restructuring - it used to be called Family Solutions. I also represent Arizona Health Foods here locally.

**ML:** What is your basic motivation in powerlifting and what is your agenda on your agenda for the upcoming year?

**TM:** My basic motivation started at a very young age. I had a paper route years ago, when it was safe to have a paper route, and I had a gentleman take me under his wing. I was always a pretty good sized kid, for my age, and this older teenager on my route said, one day, I have this weight set in my room, let's see how much you can lift. The first time I ever did it, I lifted about 100 lbs. over my head in the standing press. He thought that was pretty amazing for a seventh grader. I kept lifting periodically, and about a year later I could do 150 lbs. over my head, in the

(you will find this article continued on p. 80)

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8th grade. I was in a garage, with my peers, watching them lift weights after one of my friends got a new weight set. They were struggling with about 70-80 lbs. and they asked me how much I could do. I told them I could do about twice that, and they all said "Get out of here! You're crazy!" Sure enough, I got off my bike, and showed them and did about a 150 lb. standing press. Their jaws just dropped to the ground. Up until that time, I never really had a gauge from my peers to go by. Their reaction was what really got me, and I haven't looked back since. I've been lifting about 33 years now. The motivation was being able to do something that someone else couldn't do. Lo and behold, I'm still here doing it, doing some things that no man my age has ever done before. Of course, I've had many influences here, being around Jon Cole for many years, and I got a chance to work out with guys like Bruce Wilhelm, years ago, who went to the Olympics. Being around some of the strongest men in the world back then, also influenced me. If you witness the best, it gives you kind of a jump start. I lifted weights to be an athlete, of course. I played 17 years of football, and that's where my weight lifting back-



**In Memory of Tom's Father - Anthony C. Manno.** Every event this year, I am dedicating to my father, who passed away on June 16th of this year. We as athletes have a chance to utilize this platform we call powerlifting to demonstrate our physical strength and to set new standards in this area. However, there are many forms of strength in our world. I tell people "my physical strength is just a by-product of my inner and spiritual strength". There are many influences in our lives in order to develop these strengths, but none more profound than the influence of our parents, and in this case, my father! Our fathers teach us, and my father taught me characteristics such as nobility, self-esteem, dedication, intestinal fortitude, perseverance, humility, and other characteristics that have given us all a will to fight, a will to win, and a will to become a champion. So, Dad, I will always love you for that ... and to all our Fathers, thanks so much! A special thank you to Mike Lambert and POWERLIFTING USA for printing this dedication. \*

ground actually comes from. I was always willing to do whatever it took to become a better ball player. No matter where I went, I was always one of the strongest, if not the strongest, man on the team. I had a lot of personal pride in that also. When I retired from playing football, in 1985, from the Tampa Bay Bandits of the USFL, I took about a year hiatus from doing anything, but I was such a competitor that I wanted to get back into doing something in that area. That's when I decided to get back into bench pressing. I had been doing all three events before that, and I had always been a fairly decent squatter and

deadlifter, based on the standards of those days. I didn't know if I could be great at both of those. I knew I could be a great bench presser, so I decided to stay with my strength, and solely enter bench press competitions from that point on. One step at a time - now, here I am, having broke 53 world records. Also, back then, if you were a full (three lift) meet lifter, you really didn't see yourself lifting more than 3-4 times a year, because it took so much out of you, training for and during the event, as well as the recovery time. The method behind my madness, just doing one event, is that I can do more contests, on a

consistent basis, over the course of the year. I've been averaging anywhere between 10 and 12 meets a year, which gives me more exposure, and I can accomplish more national and world championships. **ML:** Do you think you'll be over the 700 barrier in the near future? **TM:** I plan to lift at Kieran's meet in Florida, and I may do one in Northern California, and I will be getting ready for the WABDI, Worlds in Reno. At all of these meets, I will be attempting 700 or better. I want to break that barrier, to really make an impact on this sport. I will be the first man over 40 to do that. I will take a lot of pride in that.