

INTERVIEW

A Unique View of Travis Mash told to PL USA by Jim Wendler/Elite FTS

Most of us know Travis Mash for his record breaking performances in powerlifting, but there is more to Travis than just squatting, benching and deadlifting. He was an accomplished football player and Olympic lifter. He spent time at the Olympic Training Center under coach Dragomir Cioroslan. He has also worked with some of the premier strength coaches in the United States.

I have personally known Travis for 3 years. In this time, I've learned there is a lot more to him than his big lifts and his easy going nature. Here's a glimpse:

EFS: The first thing I want to ask you is how did you get involved with the Olympic Training Center?

Travis: The honest truth is that when I graduated, all I cared about was lifting weights. At Appalachian State University, we did a ton of Olympic lifting, and I was pretty good at it, so I decided to move to Colorado Springs. The first day that I was there I got a job at a World Gym, and believe it or not, Wes Barnett, a three time Olympic athlete, was also a part time coach there. What luck!

EFS: There is a lot of finger pointing in the United States about the lack of success in U.S. Olympic Weightlifting. Do you think this is warranted?

Travis: Yes and no! First, no, in regards that our athletes are drug tested out of meet at least once per month. Other athletes from around the world are tested at meets only, and we all know that those tests are easy to beat unless you are just stupid and come in loaded to the gills. Second, our athletes did not start out at the young age of their competitors, a huge disadvantage. Olympic lift-

them to benefit. Basically it all boils down to Force = Mass x Acceleration, and if you train using the Westside template, then that is one of the big aspects that you always concentrate on. I will agree that the third stage of an Olympic lift (basically after the bar has passed the knees) probably generates the most force of anything that I can think of, so Power Cleans or Hang Cleans would be great.

EFS: What did a typical day at the OTC consist of?

Travis: I was mainly a day lifter because I never fully bought into the sport. I just couldn't get as fired up about the two lifts, but anyway, I will give you an example. A.M. Power Cleans, Front Squats, Abs and Hypers. Then you would go to sports medicine, eat, and rest. P.M. Full Snatch Workout, Snatch Pulls Heavy, Abs, Plyos. You are going heavy and hard a lot of the time. It was basically a progressive overload type of training with 6-10 sessions per week. I saw a lot of guys broken down and hurt. I personally feel that they train like Eastern European countries without the extreme supplementation (Is that politically correct)? They could benefit big time in working with Louie. Recently I fooled around with some Olympic lifting again and broke PRs my first day, so the whole "lift specific" thing was kinda shot in the butt, I guess.

EFS: I know that you also played college football. Where did you play and what position did you play?

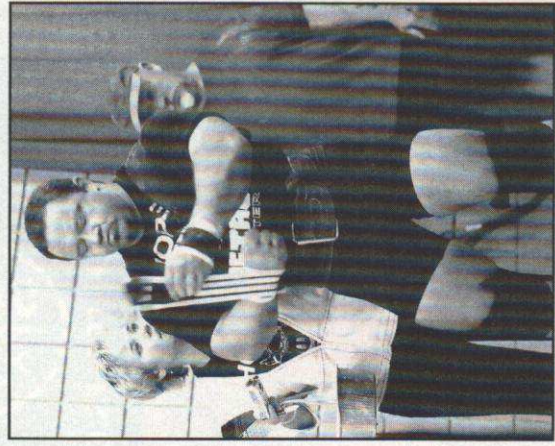
Travis: Appalachian State University and I played receiver at first, and decided that I hated taking the ass whipping. I later moved to Outside Linebacker, and did alright, but simply went through a terrible wild stage, and quit like a dumb ass, which is something that I will regret for the rest of my life. This is part of what drives me in powerlifting.

EFS: What was your attitude towards strength and conditioning when you played football? Did you always love training?

Travis: Man, I have always loved strength training. I guess the fascination with what a person can do with the human body has always blown me away. Probably the coolest example of this is my future wife Julie, who is training for bobsled competition, and she had about a 15" vertical leap when we started training, and a year later it is nearing 30". I am so fired up about that. I have never in my life seen that dramatic a turn around.

EFS: Were you allowed to structure your own training in college?

Travis: Hell no! Coach Mike Kent was in total control, and at the time I am glad because I didn't know anything.



TRAVIS is backed up by Westside Barbell's Louie Simmons in more ways than one.

EFS: Give me 5 things that you did in the college weight room that helped you become a better football player.

Travis: 1. Plyometrics, 2. Olympic Lifts, 3. Squatted deep, 4. Posterior Chain, but not as much as we should, 5. Our Coach was a demon, so my mental toughness went through the roof.

EFS: You mention that your coach was a tough SOB. What kind of things did he do?

Travis: Mike Kent was this crazy man's name and he was awesome. One of his biggest goals in the weight room was to test each athlete's mental toughness. One of the ways he would do this would be to have us perform different supersets on Fridays. Each week we had no idea what was coming, which shot anxiety levels through the roof. The supersets were also a great way to promote some muscle growth through hypertrophy, but mainly it was torture. One of these supersets was three sets to failure on the hack squat. I saw several teammates throw up and pass out. This was actually outlabeled by our Athletic Trainer because it was sending an enormous number of players to the Training Room.

Another one was Towel Pull-ups supersets with pull downs. The first set wasn't too bad, but the second and third was hell, and seemed never ending. He would also have you do weight well above your capability, and he had a rule that if your grip slipped, then you started over at Set One. I remember crying! At the end of all of this, he was probably the most loved and respected coach at Appalachian State.

EFS: I heard that you have or had a 35" vertical jump. Is this true or just a myth surrounding you?

Travis: Believe it or not, I can jump. I could actually dunk when I was younger. I still can jump though, I can touch the rim flat footed any day, and I am 5'7". I think I take this vertical thing personally. Short man syndrome or something!

EFS: Moving on to powerlifting... You've obviously had great success in the sport. And it's obviously not the huge paycheck that is driving you to succeed and break records. What is it that makes you push the envelope?

Travis: This is a great question! What drives a human to want to do things that haven't been done, shouldn't be done, or that some say can't be done. I have read books by Lance

Armstrong, watched videos by Ed Coan, I have read Michael Johnson's book all to try and understand myself. Now I am not comparing myself to these guys, at all. I just see it is that we are here on earth for a simple blink in time, and I believe that each of us is given a gift of some type by God. It is up to us to take that gift as far as possible, and then do good things for others with the success that comes. Every day of my life I have a restless unease with myself because to me the clock is ticking for all of us to send echoes in time that say, hey, I was here and I gave every ounce of myself to prove to others that nothing is impossible if you want it bad enough and believe in yourself. This last year my father passed away, and, of course, I went through a very tough time. Truth is, I still am going through a tough time because I have refused to embrace the whole thing I guess. After all of this I started wondering what the meaning of life is, and man, I was struggling big time. Lately, after praying a ton, it dawned on me that loving and supporting my family was number one, and taking my athletic gifts to a whole new level and hopefully using that to help others was second. I don't know what will happen at the Arnold or my other competitions this year, but I will say this, I am going to lift with more heart than I ever have.

EFS: Your lifts continue to grow. What have you done recently to move your lifts even more?

Travis: I think as you mature as a lifter you come to realize that balls to the wall all the time isn't all that good. In 2005 I trained insanely. Those around me can attest to the craziness that went on. In one session, I benched 535 raw, 2 boarded 585 raw, 3 boarded 815 with a shirt, full benched 735 for 1, and then did 405 for 8 reps. Why? Good question, because I am still feeling the consequences. I have simply learned to listen to myself. Not to mention, I am using a chain squat routine kinda like Phil Harrington, but with a bunch of tweaks. I think that I have learned to increase the squat and deadlift at the same time by allotting equal work to both.

EFS: You have more hands-on knowledge than any lifter I know and have a ton to offer other people. Is there anyway that people can use you as a resource, as a coach, trainer, for a seminar?

Travis: The biggest goal that I have in the future is just that. I am going to offer consultations on strength training; I am going to do seminars, on-line and in person training, and motivational seminars.

EFS: You recently spoke at a conference in North Carolina. What did you talk about?

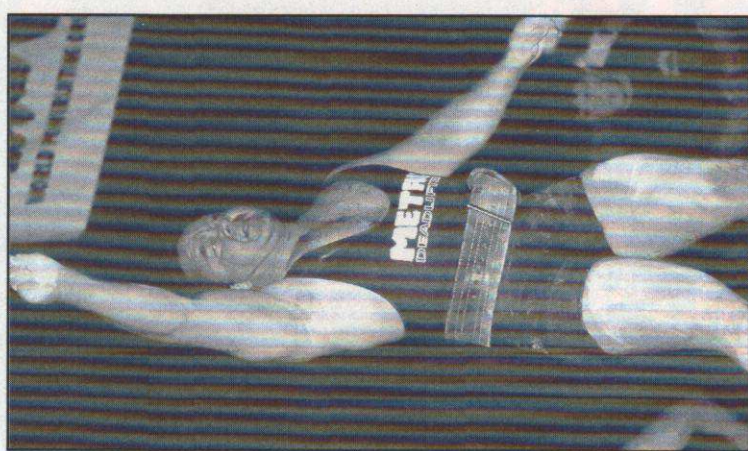
Travis: It was cool because it was Loren Seagraves of Velocity Sports, Gayle Hatch - the famous Olympic Weight Lifting Coach, and myself. Loren was awesome! I learned more in one day about sprinting than I had previously learned in my whole life. A lot of his concepts are parallel with Westside Concepts such as explosion, hip strength, and posterior chain importance. However, he isn't familiar with the principles, but hopefully he learned more about the concept, and will be open in the future to new ideas. Right now he uses the workout program designed by Gayle Hatch, which in my opinion isn't practical for most colleges and high schools. The reason is that athletes should start at a young age being taught the Olympic movements to get the benefit from the exercises, and to minimize the potential of injury. It took Shane Hamman a month with a broom stick before he could perform the movements with a barbell, so how

is a strength coach going to teach a hundred athletes to snatch and clean & jerk in the short amount of time allotted by the NCAA and high school class schedules? I gave my seminar on integrating Westside with Olympic lifting, but only the basic movements of Olympic lifting like the power clean or push press. I also talked about beating the plateaus in the bench press, and I talked about my new chain squatting routine that seems to be working. The room lit up, when I talked about the chain squats because it allows max effort squats to be performed safely, while providing a lot of the advantages of box squatting without compressing the spine. Altogether most of the crowd was digging Westside over Olympic lifting.

EFS: How can people reach you in regards to training, seminars, etc?

Travis: I have two new websites: Mashmonster.org and MethodXSP.org! Mashmonster.org is for my tried and true powerlifters and strength athletes, and MethodXSP.org is for the strength and conditioning world. I have been working with several college programs and athletes for a long time, and now it is my career, and I love it! Both sites are new and evolving each day. The process has been very exciting, watching the idea become reality. The biggest difference in my website is that I will be filming all of my workouts, and many of my training sessions with athletes, and posting all of them in their entirety on my site. This should be a great source for strength coaches, athletes, and lifters to learn new ideas, and to watch me be my own test subject. Anyone can e-mail me at travis@mashmonster.org. Thanks for this opportunity to tell the Elite faithful more about myself and what I am doing.

For more information regarding training, the most hardcore racks and equipment, apparel, Metal powerlifting gear, Force Training seminars and over 10,000 archived questions and answers visit www.EliteFTS.com.



What More is In Store? for Monster Mash!

Travis is good at all the lifts... that's how he comes up with those monster totals.