

# THE MINDSET OF JOEY

as told to Powerlifting USA by Ben Tatar of Critical Bench

**JOEY, WELCOME TO POWERLIFTING USA. IT'S GREAT TO HAVE YOU TODAY. PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO THE READERS.**

Well, my name is Joey Smith. I am thirty-six years old. I was born in Jacksonville, Florida, but moved to North Carolina when I was eleven and have been here ever since. I live in Nebo, North Carolina. I have been married to my wonderful wife, Amy, for ten years and I am the proud father of our only child, our nine year old daughter, Katelyn. I am a soccer and basketball coach for my daughter's teams. I have been a circulation manager for two newspapers here in North Carolina for five years now. I was an electrician for nine years previous to that. I have a bachelor's degree in marketing and business from Gardner Webb University, here in NC. I also own my own powerlifting gym, NeboBarbell.

I have been competing for ten years now. I started out doing raw bench only meets and did my first shirted bench only meet in 2006. My best lifts to date are 525 lb. at 275 and 500 lb. at 289 raw bench, 730 lb. at 275 and 760 lb. at 286 shirted bench, 1840 lb. at 289 raw total, 730 lb. at 289 raw squat and 610 lb. at 289 raw deadlift.

That is a very impressive resume you have! For those of you who don't know, Joey Smith is ranked #11 for best bencher in the world according to the Powerlifting Watch rankings! That gives you an idea of how strong he is. Joey, although it would take pages to write all your achievements, tell us ten lifts that you have achieved in the past two years that you are very proud of.

- Well, here we go:
- My 750 lb. shirted, bench only meet on February 21, 2009. This was my first meet back after tearing my labrum in 2008 and it was a 20 lb. PR and a win.
- My 755 lb. shirted, bench only meet on May 24, 2009, at the SPF National's, winning my first Nationals and getting best lifter award and biggest bench of the meet—another PR.
- My 760 lb. shirted, bench only meet on October 4, 2009, at the SPF World's Championships. This was the first worlds I had been to and my first worlds meet victory—another PR.
- My 1755 lb. raw full-power total on March 6, 2010. This was my first ever raw full-power meet. I had only trained 3 months for this meet—I won, and set several raw full-power SPF records.
- My 700 lb. raw squat at that same meet. I was really proud of this squat for my first meet and it being raw.
- My 600 lb. raw deadlift at the March 6th meet. I hate deadlifting and it is my hardest lift.

- So, I was very pleased to pull 600.
- My 1840 lb. raw full-power total on June 6, 2010, at the SPF National's. Not only was this my second raw full-power meet ever, with only five months training, I had an 85 lb. PR total compared to last meet, won my weight class, made PRs on every lift, and won myself my second SPF National's, but this time my raw and full-power lifts broke all the SPF world, national and NC state raw full-power records at the time.
- My 730 lb. raw squat at the June 6th SPF National's meet. I was looking for 750, but did what I needed to hold my total—30 lb. PR.
- My 500 lb. raw bench at the June 6th SPF National's meet. I had only benched 455 at the last meet because of an injured pec—45 lb. PR.
- My 610 lb. raw deadlift at the June 6th SPF National's meet, as well. I knew I had more, but missed my second. It took this pull to win and I did—10 lb. PR.

Joey, you are a nationally ranked bencher, #11 at Powerlifting Watch and you were a dominant bencher years ago. I remember you were doing very well in a bench shirt, but you also liked competing raw. How would you compare the shirt and raw game? How does your training and mindset differ between going for a bigger raw bench versus a bigger shirt bench? Well, I still like to think that I'm not too shabby a bencher now, raw or equipped. LOL. I like lifting, period. Gear or raw, it doesn't matter. I want to be as complete a lifter as I can be. Going raw shows your true power, but lifting equipped still takes power, but also technique, and years of learning. Raw is just getting under the bar and pressing the weight, not much thinking involved. Shirted benching is not that simple. When it comes to a shirt you must understand technique and knowledge of how your shirt works, and proper training. There is no perfect training format. What works for one does not work for all. There is no magic pill. If there was I would be selling it like crazy. Training is training. A person needs determination and heart, without which it doesn't matter what kind of training template they use.

In the future, which will you favor? My shirt for sure. I take pride in my raw bench, but I know I still haven't fully tapped into my ability with the shirt. I have had a few injuries in the last couple of years that keep taking me a step backwards, but I work around them and keep coming back getting PRs. I still have some unfinished business with my shirt that I

photos courtesy Joey Smith

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will achieve. I love shirted benching and the challenge of learning it. There's nothing like handling 760 plus in your hands!

**For other benchers who want to be more competitive, what would be your top five tips for a raw bencher? What about the shirted bencher?** I can answer these both at the same time—form and technique. Form and technique are everything, whether you are raw benching or shirted benching. Proper form is key.

Make sure your triceps and back are up to par. Work your triceps and make them stronger. Also train your back to help with your set up and to power through heavier weights.

Know your body. Be smart, have a plan. Don't be scared, but don't be stupid. Being scared of the weight or afraid to try different things can get you hurt and can hold a lifter back from reaching his full potential.

Have great training partners. Training partners are important for several reasons, not just to shoot the shit. You don't need cheerleaders, you need to be told when you're not doing things correctly. You need training partners who are there to help you and want you to succeed. Whether it is getting coached, being on time, dependability, or spotting correctly, doing their part is vital for a group to thrive. This can be tough at times with so many egos and testosterone boiling over, but if you can ever get the proper ingredients right, a great group of training partners can make each other greater.

**You're also good at the squat and deadlift. What are some of your favorite squat/deadlift moments.**

I may be okay at the squat, but I suck at the deadlift! As I mentioned earlier (because I really only have these two meets to go off of) my two raw full-power meets this year were both awesome. Winning at both, earning elite status both times and earning the respect of my peers as being a well-rounded lifter was a big deal for me. As mentioned earlier, my 730 lb. raw squat at the SPF Nationals was a very proud moment for me as was my 1840 lb. raw total, plus winning wasn't too bad either!

**Everyone keep your eyes out for Joey Smith. He has bigger plans ahead! Joey, tell us about your squat and deadlift routine.**

I used Block Periodization training for both my raw meets. Each week is based off percentages that are achievable each week and continue to get heavier each week as well.

**Joey, being successful, strong and very monstrous, have you encountered a lot of jealousy? How do people respond to you being so much bigger and stronger than most people?** Monstrous? LOL. Well, my training partners do call me "Shrek." I'm just not sure if that's a good thing! I enjoy being bigger than most guys. It's always fun walking into places and knowing you are stronger than just about anyone in there. Of course, I have encountered jealousy. Anyone who has had some kind of success in

life does. The haters always make me laugh. With all the things they have to talk or think about in their life, I am the one on their minds? I love it! A friend told me a long time ago, "Love the ones that hate you most because they are your biggest fans." This statement is so true. It's always fun having people come up and ask, "Hey do you lift weights?" or "How much do you bench?" or the best one I get a lot from older men, "I used to lift weights when I was younger. Yeah, I could bench in the 500s! Well, that was before I hurt my \_\_\_\_\_." I always get a good laugh from that. People always stare at muscular individuals. I love it when we are at a meet and the powerlifters all go into a restaurant. Everyone is looking, pointing and saying god knows what. I take a lot of pride in my size and strength. I have worked hard to get where I am and when other people recognize it, it always makes me feel good.

**Who do you train with and where? How is that going? How do you get fired up to lift such insane iron?**

We train at my gym, NeboBarbell in Nebo, NC. I train with Tim Hudgins, Kelly Wofford, Jonathan Britt, Lavan Clemmons and Barry Williams, mainly. There are several other younger lifters who are getting into the swing of things too. I opened this gym in August two years ago and it has been the best thing to help my powerlifting—no more traveling two hours one way to train. My gym is thirty yards from my house. The convenience of having your own gym is supremely helpful. The crew we have here is great. We all support one another and work to make each other better and stronger. This year we had two national champs, and last year we had three national champs and two world champs, so we are doing something right. We are a strong united team and I am honored to not only train with these guys, but to call them my friends.

I don't get too crazy when I lift. Well, not like I used to anyway. I try to stay focused, going over the lift in my mind, seeing myself making the lift. I stay positive and focused on the task at hand. Everyone has their own way of doing things. I just try to relax and breathe. Focus, then accomplish. "Believe & Become" is what we say at our gym.

**What are your future goals?**

To bench 800 plus in my shirt. That has been a goal of mine for a long time, but injuries have kept setting me back. I really just want to get stronger, stay healthy and keep hitting PRs.

**What are your five favorite assistance exercises for a bigger bench? What about for squat and deadlift? How often do you switch your assistance exercises up?**

For benchpress: board work, reverse bands, close grip bench, floorpress, tri ext. For squats: goodmornings, glute/ham raise, leg curls, chain work, box squats. For deadlift: deadlift! Pin pulls, stiff leg deadlifts, block pulls, shrugs.

I don't switch a lot. I use what works for me.

I have done enough variations of lifts to know what I get a good response from and what I don't. Luckily, Jeremy Frey has really helped me understand what setting up a true training regimen does for yourself and the success you can gain from it. Provided it is properly planned and executed. I have been doing block periodization for almost two years now under Frey's guidance and it has really helped me.

**Great exercises. Write these down, people. Joey, tell us about your diet and what supplements do you take?**

I try to consume a gram of protein per pound of my body weight each day. I eat a lot of chicken, steak, eggs, peanut butter, milk, and sometimes some good ol' doughnuts. I drink two to three protein shakes a day and I drink a lot of water. I also take a multi-vitamin, fish oil, vitamin c, and an Animal Pack each day. My diet stays pretty clean through the week and I eat what I want on the weekends.

**So far in your powerlifting journey, list your favorite, most hardcore, funniest moments and the moment that has most changed you.**

**FAVORITE MOMENT:** The day I got the opportunity to join Team EliteFTS. I will never forget that phone call or that day. I was so proud and honored to be given such a great opportunity and to be a part of the greatest powerlifting company and team there is. I still am. I was so excited. I called and texted everyone I knew for several days. It's a blessing and an honor and I am very proud to be apart of Team EliteFTS. That is, by far, my favorite moment.

**HARDCORE MOMENT:** Well, the hardcore moment was not me, but my good friend Barry Williams. We were at the APF Nationals in Vegas and Barry was doing bench only, same as me. On his second attempt, I believe, he brought down the bar (Phil Harrington and I were side spotting) and just as he touched and went to drive the bar up, his left arm (my side) snapped in half. It sounded like a two-by-four just broke in half. As soon as we got the bar back up on the rack, Barry looked at me and said, "Grab me a board! Grab me a board! I need a splint!" So I grabbed a board lying around and a knee wrap and we made up a spur of the moment, red neck splint. Both bones in his forearm were broken in half. No tears, not a lot of emotion. All he did was laugh and say, "Well, at least I got my first attempt in" and shot the crowd the bird. And off to the ER we went. I will never forget that day.

**FUNNY MOMENT:** I guess my funniest moment was when I benched 700 in my shirt for the first time. I was so excited afterwards I ran into the crowd and dove on top of my buddies. We got a kick out of it.

**MOMENT THAT HAS MOST CHANGED ME:** I have been to four national meets, two APF and two SPF Nationals. My first Nationals was in Las Vegas back in 2006. I only benched 655 lb. at 275. There were a lot of great lifters at this meet. After my paltry 655 (compared to the other bigger benchers that day) and finishing

5th place, I knew I was going to have to be more prepared and stronger to compete against this caliber of lifters if I wanted to win a national title. So I went home with my tail between my legs, but with an enormous amount of respect and new found knowledge from the event and the lifters there. I have since won two straight national events, raw and equipped, and I did so because I was more prepared and better trained. To be a winner, you must train to be a winner. With help from so many, I have become better and smarter about what I am doing and how I am doing it.

**Wow, all incredible moments! What's best about powerlifting?**

The challenge the sport presents each and every day—competing at meets, pushing yourself further than you knew possible, meeting new people, and the camaraderie between lifters. I have always loved going to meets and meeting new lifters and learning from them. It's also a great time to see friends that you don't get to see a lot and seeing them compete. I have respect for any individual that steps on the platform. I love the atmosphere at meets, everyone laying it all on the line and then supporting each other. I have yet been to a meet and not seen the lifters eager to help and support each other.

**Do you have a message for the future generation of powerlifters?**

I would say to just keep yourself grounded. Remember all the people who have helped you get to where you are and always remember, you're lifting weights, not curing cancer, so don't get a big head. Always respect your fellow lifters.

**I'm going to name a powerlifting topic. I want you let me know what comes to mind...**

– **225 lb. raw bench presser:** Me in 11th grade. I thought I was big shit getting 225.

– **315 lb. raw bench presser:** A respectable raw bench.

– **405 lb. raw bench presser:** Always nice to smash eight wheels. Very respectable raw bench press.

– **500 lb. raw bench presser:** A great raw bench; 500 and above is always impressive to me.

– **600 lb. raw bench presser:** An incredible bench press at any body weight. Not many of those being done around the planet.

– **700 lb. raw bench presser:** One name comes to mind—Scot Mendelson.

– **Bencher that fears the shirt:** Will never succeed in their goals or possible potential. Fear is your enemy in this sport.

– **Bencher that disses the shirt:** That's their prerogative. That's why there are other channels to watch on TV or other stations to listen to on the radio. If you don't like it, don't do it. Do your own thing, but don't diss something because you don't do it. That's just stupid and ignorant.

– **People who fear you:** They should.

– **People who look up to you:** I try to be the best father, husband, professional and lifter I can be. If someone admires or looks up to me, that's a compliment to me and I hope I can inspire



Joey Smith with a 610 raw DL at the 2010 SPF Nationals

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Moving 730 pounds with pure raw power at the 2010 SPF Nationals

others, just like so many who have inspired me whom I look up to and respect.

— **Your fans:** Well, my daughter, wife, family and friends are my biggest fans. Their support is what drives me. I enjoy talking and speaking to anyone and everyone. I have met some really incredible people in this sport. I am just as much a fan of this sport and my fellow competitors and lifters as anyone. I love talking to people who follow me. I think it's cool. I will always try to help anyone who asks.

— **Ryan Kennelly:** The best SHW shirted bencher ever. Mr. Consistency, a legend.

**Joey, a bencher comes up to you and says, "I haven't gotten stronger in years. I need help! I feel like I have reached my potential and I'm just not into it." What do you say to get them going again?**

If you're not into this sport 100% and are not willing to push yourself and make the sacrifices needed to succeed, you need to try something else—like knitting! LOL. Each and every individual I know in this sport is always pushing themselves to get stronger and better. I will help anyone who is willing to listen. I don't have all the answers, but I'll give that person all the knowledge I have to try and get them over the hump. Sometimes a person just needs to change up what they are doing. Change can be a good thing if what you are doing is not work-

ing. There's no reason to keep hitting your head on the same wall and getting the same results.

**I'm going to list five aspects of powerlifting. Tell me which you think are most important and why: Diet, Genetics, Mind/Heart, Training Partners, Rest.**

1. **Mind/Heart:** you must, and I repeat MUST, have a strong mind and a strong heart for this sport, or really anything you want to excel at. A weak mind equals a weak heart and vice-versa. You can't just have one, you must have both.  
2. **Training partners:** Good, dependable training partners are vital at many levels. You need people you can trust to support you and the group. Good training partners need to push one another and help each other attain their goals. Training partners are like your family. You spend a lot of time with each other and you depend on each other's punctuality, similar goals, knowledge, friendship and the consistency of being there every training day to help and motivate each other.  
3. **Diet:** Proper nutrition is a crucial element in the muscle building process. In order to gain solid muscle and strength, powerlifters need more food, more often. Never allow your nutrition to falter—even for a few hours. Keep extra food, protein drinks and supplements at work, in your gym bag and in your car. Staying hydrated and eating properly throughout the

day is very important.

4. **Rest:** I think one of the most common reasons people fail in their quest to gain muscle and strength is because they fail to appreciate the importance of rest. Too many people over train and are not getting proper rest. It is when you are sleeping that your muscle building hormones are doing their job. A good night's sleep can be the final piece of the puzzle you've been looking for. Don't overlook getting rest. You'll be more alert. It'll improve your concentration skills. You'll be healthier, stronger and more prepared for your next training session in the gym.  
5. **Genetics:** I don't think I have good genetics. I push myself to the maximum day in and day out with my training, and try to stick to a decent diet and supplements regimen. I try to get the proper rest I need and hope for the best. No one in my family was a great athlete or anything like that. I think genetics do have a role, but I also think you get what you put into it as well. Yes, there are freaks of nature out there, sure, but not many. I think hard work, dedication and commitment are the major factors at work more so than genetics.

**You're ranked in Michael Soong's top bencher list, which only few of the best benchers/powerlifters in the world get to be a part of! How do you want to be remembered?**

I want to be remembered as a great father and



According to Powerlifting Watch rankings, Joey is one of the top bench pressers

husband first. My family means the world to me. Nothing is more important than family. Without their love and support each and every day it would be much harder to be as driven as I am. They are my backbone and the conduit that galvanizes my life.

**What makes Joey Smith happy?**

That's easy to answer; my daughter, Katelyn. She makes me smile everyday. Since the day she was born I knew I had a purpose in life and I am determined to be the best father I can be to her for the rest of my life. She makes me very, very proud. Katelyn has played soccer for twelve seasons (I have been the coach of her teams every year). She also plays basketball, which is the sport she was meant for (I coach her basketball teams, too). Having her involved in sports, with me coaching, gives us a lot of quality time to spend together—which I love. With work and school schedules it is wonderful to have that time with each other. She has made me a better person and makes me a better father each and every day. My daughter inspires me to be the best I can be and challenge myself continually. Katelyn supports my powerlifting and she takes a lot of pride in what her daddy does and the accomplishments I have achieved. She is my heart beat and I am very blessed to have her.

**This is great. What a freakin' journey it has**



Joey with fellow Nebo Barbell lifters

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been and continues to be! Joey, it has been great interviewing you. In closing, who would you like to thank?

My list is long, so I hope it's okay. I have a lot of folks to thank for me getting here: I want to first thank my wife, Amy, and my daughter, Katelyn. They have been there for me through the years and supported me and all my endeavors with my powerlifting career. Their support has been vital for me. I want to thank several people who helped me from the beginning of my powerlifting career until now: Mike Schwanke, Barry Williams, Chris Cooke, Chris Clarke, Travis Mash, Chris Mason, Mike White, Corey Brown, Chip Stewart, Cheryl Clodfelter, Tim Hudgins, Josh Kneen, Timmy Boyce, Phil Harrington, Natilie Harrington, Jason Coker, Tim Higgins, Rodney Coates, Charles Baily, Jim Hoskinson, Jason Pegg, Jo Jordan, LaVan Clemmons, Kelly Wofford, Jonathan Britt, Adam Hires, Brian Schwabb, Kyle Robertson, Robbie Robinson, John Pinder, Brett Rapp, Dave Hoff, Donnie Thompson, Louie Simmons, Team Torture, Robbie, Greg Conley, Greg Crook, James Gentry, LB, Mark Farris, Alan Thomas, APT, Tom Simon, Casey Bard, USPlabs, Mike Westerdal, CriticalBench.com, Team EliteFTS, Jeremy Frey, and Dave Tate and Jim Wendler at EliteFTS for giving me a chance to be part of such a great company and supporting me. I also want to thank Ben Tatar and Powerlifting USA for giving me this interview. «



Proud father, Joey Smith, with his daughter, Katelyn

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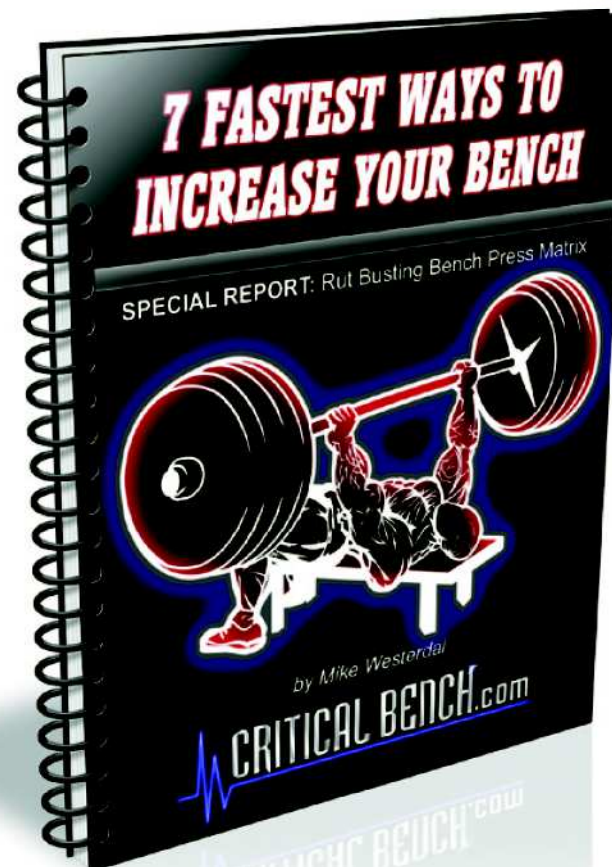
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