

# INTERVIEW

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

## Walter Thomas One of the most accomplished and respected athletes in the history of the sport reflects on his new book, POWERLIFTERS GUIDE TO SUCCESS, the sport itself, and his life with World Champ wife Juli since stepping off the contest platform.

**PL USA:** What have you been doing with yourself the last couple of years? Are you still training?

**Thomas:** Juli and I have been very busy the past 3 years. I have been very active in the U.S. Army Reserves, working a lot of extra duty and overtime to accumulate enough to pay for Juli's college tuition, the printing costs on my book, and many other things. I was recently promoted to the rank of Major in the U.S. Army Reserves, a milestone I have been working on for 3 years. Juli has been doing excellently in her school activities; she is majoring in civil engineering with a 4.0 point grade point average. Juli received an academic scholarship from Oklahoma University because of her high GPA. I still train about two days a week, only moderately due to an old back injury. Juli has not been able to train consistently, because of the long hours she invests in completing her homework.

**PL USA:** How long have you been working on your new book and how do you feel about how it turned out?

**Thomas:** I have been working on my new book ever since 1982. This project has been on and off the back burner numerous times, mainly due to a shortage of financing. I had to work many extra days and overtime to pay for the expenses involved. I am very satisfied with the book and I know it will help many powerlifters and save them a lot of time in their training achievements.

**PL USA:** You've had some terrific contests with another Oklahoman, Dennis Wright. What are some of the great moments you can recall from your competitions with him?

**Thomas:** Dennis Wright is the

greatest World Champion that I have ever competed against. Dennis and his family are very dear friends of mine and I will always respect him to the highest degree on and off the platform. When Dennis and I competed the question was not who won the meet, because I feel that we both were winners and deserved first place. Dennis and I tied in the total on the majority of all of our confrontations. When I competed against him it took me 3 to 4 weeks to recuperate from such an exhausting battle. He made me feel like I had been in a 15 round bout with the heavyweight champion of the world. I never could out-squat or out-bench Dennis Wright. All I can say is thank God for the deadline and that it is the last event of the 3 events in competition. I believe if the deadline was first and the squat was last, the outcomes would have been different.

**PL USA:** As one of the few husbands and wife World Champions in the history of the sport, it might be interesting to know if Juli had an interest in the sport before you met her, and how did you help her during her championship years?

**Thomas:** Yes, Juli had been exposed to the sport before we met. Juli already had the desire and assets to

spectators at the competition site were very supportive and responsive to every lifter that approached the platform regardless of which country the lifter represented. (6) The opening ceremonies were excellent and colorful. (7) Juli and I did quite a bit of shopping and gift giving, we enjoyed that. Juli bought several Indian outfits. We even purchased our first set of wedding rings there. Germany was an interesting trip, the highlight being that I won my 4th world title.

**PL USA:** Have you retired completely from competitive lifting, and what role have injuries played in that decision?

**Thomas:** Old powerlifters never completely retire, they just fade away (smile). I experienced a chronic back injury during the last 3 years in my lower lumbar region. I still go to the gym and train according to how I feel on a given day. I will not say that I have retired completely, because I have retired many times in the past and ended up lifting again. I may lift in some bench press contests since my bench is the only thing presentable right now. Maybe, one day, a national meet. Who knows?

**PL USA:** How did your Christian beliefs help you in your powerlifting career?

**Thomas:** The foundation of my success and achievements in the sport of powerlifting is based on the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ as well as other aspects of my life. My first introduction to powerlifting came about after I submitted myself to Jesus and became his servant. I give all the credit to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. I don't claim to be perfect or "holier than thou," because I have faltered along the way, but I intend to make my relationship with Jesus an everlasting one. I thank God for all of His blessings.

**PL USA:** What does the future hold for Walter and Juli Thomas and their involvement in Powerlifting?

**Thomas:** I intend to promote the sport of powerlifting by directing lifting meets, establishing a mail order business, maybe opening a health spa, and officiating at power meets. Juli's immediate goal at this point is to get her degree in civil engineering at the University of Oklahoma. I believe once she gets this milestone behind her, she will compete again, and be very successful at it.

**PL USA:** If you had to change any aspect of your lifting career, what would it be?

**Thomas:** I competed for about 15 consecutive years. I wish I would have taken about four sabbatical years in that time frame. I probably would not have injured my back.

**PL USA:** Did you possess an abundance of natural strength before you started powerlifting? Were you a good athlete in other sports?

**Thomas:** I inherited most of my strength and physique from my mother and father. My mother and seven brothers and sisters have muscular physiques and do not even lift weights. When I was 12-15 years old I used to be good at running 100 yard sprints, and Little League baseball. I did not play high school or college sports. I began powerlifting when I was 26 years old.

**PL USA:** Your physique has long been admired from both a powerlifting and bodybuilding point of view, have you ever measured any of your bodyparts? If so, what are they?

**Thomas:** Chest - 48", Arms - 18", Thighs - 26", Calves - ?

**PL USA:** How do you see the present separation of the sport into 3 rival organizations resolving itself?

**Thomas:** I think the only ways our sport will ever be under one organization again are: (1) the de-stigmatization of steroids off of the face

of the earth, (2) political leaders concerned for the welfare of the athlete. Otherwise I think the sport will continue to have separate organizations.

I think athletes as well as political leaders have become judgmental and there is finger pointing in all 3 organizations. I don't believe in judging any man or woman. I leave that task up to God. I believe if we put any person under the close scrutiny of the magnifying glass we will find sin in that individual's life, whether it be drug usage, adultery, fornication, pre-judice, lying, stealing, etc. just to name a few. For the most part, people know what's right and what's wrong. Personally, I believe that weightlifting athletes will be a lot healthier, and live a longer life if they don't use drugs.

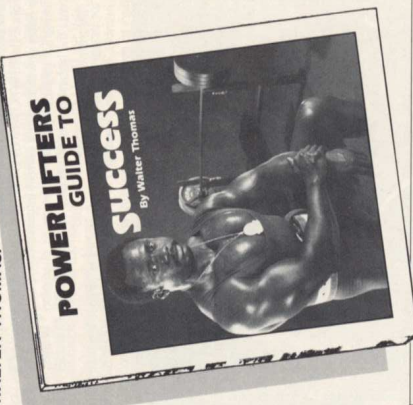
**PL USA:** Name the best thing a lifter can do in his training...and the worst.

**Thomas:** Best Thing: Is to ascertain the best training methods that will cause you to advance. Worst Thing: Do not overtrain, take time off to give the body a sufficient amount of time to recuperate.



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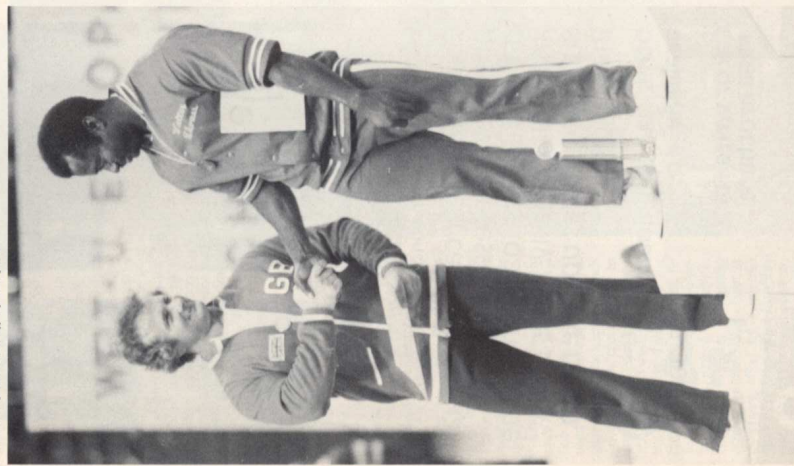
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- CHAPTER 1 WARMING-UP FOR THE BIG THREE.
- CHAPTER 2 DEVELOP A POWERFUL SQUAT.
- CHAPTER 3 DEVELOP A MASSIVE BENCH PRESS.
- CHAPTER 4 DEVELOP A WORLD RECORD DEADLIFT.
- CHAPTER 5 POWER RACK TRAINING: KEY TO STRENGTH.
- CHAPTER 6 ASSISTANCE EXERCISES
- CHAPTER 7 SUCCESSFUL STRENGTH ROUTINES.
- CHAPTER 8 PREPARATION FOR COMPETITION.
- CHAPTER 9 ESSENTIAL DIET INFORMATION.
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He Respects...and Is Respected...Walter with Bill West (left) at the '82 Worlds



Three of the Greatest World Champions and Friends...Walter Thomas, Dennis Wright, Juli Thomas. Fernando photo