

**THE  
ONE  
AND  
ONLY  
DONNIE  
THOMPSON**

INTERVIEWED BY SCOTT DEPANFILIS

# DONNIE THOMPSON

## Are you the strongest right now that you've ever been?

No, I am not the strongest I have been. I think I was in 2004! I am 46 years old and am tricking my body into submission. I am way more consistently stronger than ever before. My heavy squats have killed my bench press. I can't describe the pain in my elbows and shoulders. The Kettlebell work and Jumpstretch Band rehab keep me together and a lot of Celebrex!

## What was your body weight during the world record squat? What weight do you like to be at when you do these bone crushing numbers?

I weighed in at 384 pounds. Three weeks earlier I was 393 pounds. Damn, that was too much. The 3,000 total will take a big body weight and around the same, 380-385!

## Despite improvements in training techniques and equipment, I think a lot of people still don't understand what support gear does and doesn't do. I think many people believe these world record totals come easy because of the

## gear, and not because of the lifter or intense training. Donnie, could you elaborate on the kind of training required to hit the numbers that you do?

What gear does: it keeps you relative healthy. You know if you tried these big lifts raw all the time you would need surgery on everything that bent—you live to lift another day. The old timers would hit a big squat once or twice and their careers were over. If that was the case, I would have been done in 2002. Now we can train heavier all year long and minimize severe injury. The good lifting gear in my book is INZER! It is all I wear. All big squats were done in INZER gear. I will not be an exception to the rule! At least not in this case. I like the fact that competitive powerlifting offers three means of competition now: raw, single-ply, and multi-layered.

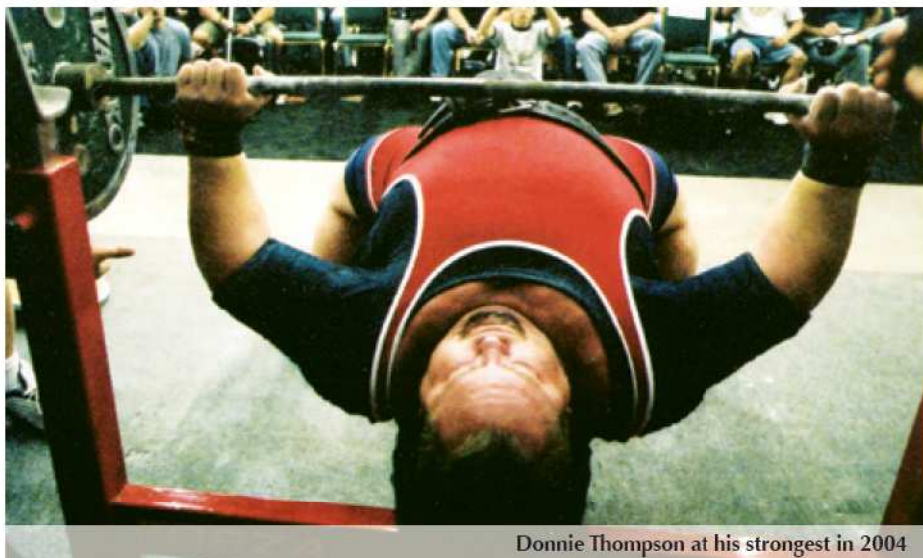
The multi-layered attracted me over ten years ago because it followed the balls to the wall philosophy! Jesse Kellum summed it up best: "Take what you want, wear what you want and try and beat me on the platform!!!"

Human ambition can't help but push the limits of human performance in anything. Whether it is racing a car, flying an aircraft, rockets, or weapons of mass destruction, the human mind set is to try and be as GOD! That will never happen, but we can't help ourselves. Limits are meant for us to explore. With powerlifting, you can push the limits in all three categories. However, for me, gear reigns king.

The only thing I can say negative about gear is the dynamics of the lift change. If you do not use it, you will never get any big numbers out of it. Years ago we put on squat suits and bench shirts on meet day only. Hard to believe we ever posted any numbers doing that. Now complete training cycles are dedicated to gear training. They evolve every year and if you do not keep up with what is new, you will be out. When I squat with gear, it resembles nothing I feel when I squat raw or with briefs. It is a totally new lift. I must acclimate myself to the new style. Pressure is the biggest obstacle to overcome. It is extremely painful. But when you hit the big number, it is so fulfilling.



Donnie Thompson making his record 1260 squat at the 2011 SPF North Myrtle Beach Powerlifting Classic (SPF photos)



Donnie Thompson at his strongest in 2004

“ I will get this total. In fact, I will do anything it takes to get this 3,000 total. Why? Because it is for me!”

- DONNIE THOMPSON

**I think it's important for people to understand that you are one of the strongest raw lifters in the world. For those that don't remember, what were your numbers and total the last time you competed raw in 2006?**

I don't know where this is going, but I will try... 805, 565, and 800! It was at a meet called New England Record Breakers. I squatted an easy 870 pounds, but was turned down, to my dismay. This meet was unforgettable. It was possibly the biggest scam pulled on seriously talented powerlifters of all time. They put ads in *PL USA* with dollar signs all around and announced our names. **BIG CASH PRIZES AWARDED!** Used big names to lure the lifters. I only did it because Andy Bolton was going to. At least Brian Siders showed up and we competed heads up.

They promised expenses paid and prize money. After intense competition and an all day affair, we went to get paid and they pulled us off to the side and told us they were good for the money and we would see it in a week. I borrowed the money from my dad and it cost over seven hundred dollars to get up there and

do this. The two promoters stiffed everyone. So as far as the great NERB raw lifting, I do not consider that meet legit and it is funny how we just let those two promoters screw some of the greatest lifters and benchers of all time. WPO paid what they owed us in the WPO. The NERB crew ran off and disappeared like Madeline Murray O'Hares headless body in the desert. Of all my lifting experiences, that raw meet was bad 360 degrees.

**If the situation was ideal, what do you think you could do today if you were to compete raw again?**

I would train for six months for this and go for a 2,300 total, 920 squat, 580 bench and 800 plus deadlift.

**I think there's also a misconception of being a powerlifter and also being an intelligent, technical, strategically minded individual, not to mention the focus and type of person who is capable of reaching goals you've set. Could you discuss the type of mindset it takes to squat a**

**world record total?**

Those were the old days, Scott. And there was much to substantiate that. You had to be a primal male in the old days with minimal to no gear and more drugs than the body could imagine. Back in the '70s and early '80s, performance enhancement drugs were not illegal. If the dose you took was this affective, then double the dose would be twice as affective. So the primal mindset had its place. The big, strong, huge guys were usually jerks and misunderstood. So they kept to themselves. And if they did one thing wrong, they would be demonized in the news. Today, you have to be a trench work scientist to get ahead. That includes training, supplementation and nutrition. Also of importance now, more than ever, is recovery—I call it mobility work. But if you want equipment sponsors and supplement sponsors, they like you to be able to communicate to the regular person who does a majority of their purchases. I use AtLargeNutrition for my protein. I have since 2006. I sought them out because their product was actually real. Other pro powerlifters

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Donnie's 1260 lb. record squat!



Donnie at a WPO competition in 2004

and strongmen turned me on to it and I begged Chris Mason to sell it to me at cost. Then he decided to take me on as a spokesman and we have had a great relationship since. I can honestly say to kids and fellow competitors alike, I can believe in a product because it does what it says it does....WORK!

## How has your field of work impacted you in terms of your powerlifting?

Meeting and working with great people in physical therapy has opened doors for me, no doubt. I have met some of the best in the country. My boss, Barry Fitch, owns Progressive Sports Physical Therapy in Columbia, SC! He allows me to bring in top experts for seminars and workshops. He let me go to California for a month to not only meet top physical therapists, but train for my meet. He is also a licensed PT and very knowledgeable. With their knowledge and eagerness to get athletes back in the arena of competition, the strength end takes huge precedent. Now with mobility training that was created by Dick Hartzell of Jumpstretch, we are all over that for recovery from heavy training and prevention of major injuries. That is where I come in. Once people are done with physical therapy, they see me. I even do seminars and workshops on this stuff. All the lifters laugh at it until they meet that wall. The wall where on their own, they make zero improvement or they are hurt all the time. More drugs is not an answer. You must put the time in. I like prevention and maintaining a high level of strength output. I hate the hollow athlete—the flash in the pan.

**What particular body type is ideal for powerlifting? Do you feel that you were born with certain attributes that allow you to lift heavier weights than others or has it been a constant battle to overcome plateaus?**

I think having very strong joints, ligaments and

tendons help. If you were the football player that was rarely injured and laughed at all those poor bastards getting treatment all the time, you might be a good candidate for lifting. I like thick joints and legs that bow out somewhat. Knock knees tend not to do real well, but it can be done. So yes, genetics is very important. Why do college and NFL linemen look like giants? Because they need to be to compete. If you are built like David Letterman, you probably want to stick to talking about everything instead of being the man in the arena. If an average guy tried to do what we do, he would die a fast and an un-glorious death. I don't think average people comprehend what big linemen in football or the pro powerlifter are capable of. Our bodies are so well developed that we have no weaknesses. So, for instance, if we both were to be hit by baseball bats, we would be pissed and "Joe average" would be dead. Enough said.

## Does having a strong positive group of training partners impact your lifting success or do you ultimately feel that you are on your own journey?

For the most part, I have not had much experience with a positive group of training partners. They mostly click and grumble about each other and are really negative. When I was in California, I lifted at Mark Bell's gym called Supertraining for a month. That is the first time in a long time I have ever been in a positive environment. It was surreal. But they told me they even have their ups and downs with their own. So, at some point it is the individual that ultimately succeeds and only if they are both servant and master. Meaning, your ass spots and coaches your friends, then they spot and coach you when you go. I have made it to where I am at with just anyone I can get to spot me. So it is hard to constantly coordinate that and train heavy too. We have a lot of other powerlifters in this town,

but they opt to do their own thing by themselves. It is hard to train with me all the time. I am for real and do not miss. Nothing is more important than training and competing. When there is something that is more important, you will not see me on the platform anymore. I will have reached my goals or my family needs me more. That is all. I have three rules I follow and expect my training partners to follow: I don't care about your school! I don't care about your job! And I don't give a F#\$% about your girlfriend! This is when we train, so be here. Maybe that is why I am by myself so much. Ha ha.

## Three-thousand pounds is within your grasp. Where and when will we get to see you compete and break your world record total?

My top lifts are as follows: 1,260 squat, 910 bench, and 832 deadlift. That total is 3,002 pounds!!! As far as I know, I am the only man who can say this. For me to do this in a meet, I am strong enough and mean enough, but am I lucky enough???

Everything is going to have to be just going my way. For some reason—and it is not for me to ask why—I will have to have a very lucky day. Will it be 1,260, 935, 805?? Will it be 1,300, 900, 800?? Who knows? But I will have to have a huge squat and bench just to set up the deadlift. I will have to open with my goal lifts. No openers or lead up lifts. All that will be done in the back. I will tell you this, Scott. I will get this total. In fact, I will do anything it takes to get this 3,000 total. Why? Because it is for me!! No one pays me and there is no money in it. So my reward is my big total. When I talk to others and preach hard work and determination, I will not use me as the example. I will just reflect and smile on the mountain of aches, pains, missed attempts and failures that hold up that little victory flag! Sweet is the meet that goes my way!! ☺