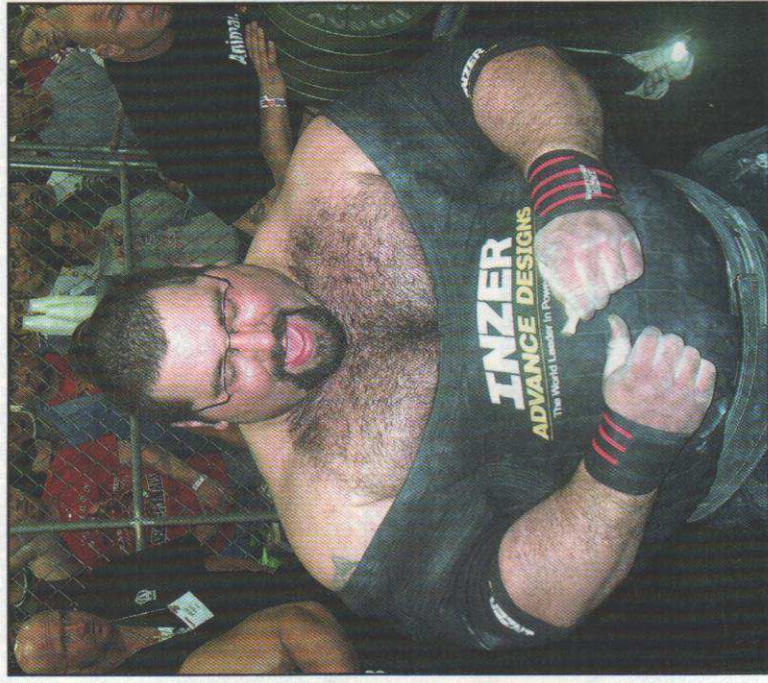


INTERVIEW

MIKE WOLFE as interviewed by Chris Mason, At Large Nutrition



The Wolfe putting his talents on display in the Universal Animal Cage

Mike Wolfe is among the best benchers in the world. He has a competition best raw press of 600 lbs and a shirted press of 835 lbs. The focus of this interview will be on how Mike trains, eats, and supplements.

Mike is a bit different than many of his benching peers in that he was not a benching prodigy. In fact, Mike struggled with a high school best bench press of 185 lbs. If you had known him then you certainly would not have predicted benching greatness in his future. That is what makes finding out about the ins and outs of his training, dieting, and supplementing so interesting. Show me the self-made man rather than the "natural" and I will learn something of true value.

AL: Let's get right to it Mike. Please outline the routine you are currently employing.

MW: I follow a very simple regimen. I have one max-effort day (ME) on Sundays. Mondays are for upper back followed by shoulders on Tuesdays. Wednesdays are for dynamic work (DE) and then I train upper back and shoulders again on Thursdays. I place a great deal of emphasis on rear delts, traps, and lats as I truly believe their maximal development is needed for a big bench. Fridays and Saturdays are rest days. I do no direct leg work and no direct biceps work. I train triceps heavily on both bench days.

AL: I am sure our readers would like to know exactly what you do for each body part and on each day. Can you detail it out for us?

MW: On ME day I will do specific exercises which work well with the maximum effort goal of the day. These consist of movements like floor presses with chains, full range bench with purple bands, board presses, and other similar movements. I will rotate them on a 4 week training cycle. I always train for a 1 rep PR. Volume is usually 10 working sets. I then perform a heavy triceps movement. As of late I have been fond of football-bar cable pushdowns and kettlebell extensions. I usually wrap the day up with V-bar pushdowns.

Here is my exact workout from my most recent ME day. I was doing full ROM benching with the purple bands doubled-up.

- Warm-up - bar for 20 reps
- Warm-up - 135 for 10 reps
- Add purple bands to bar which equates to roughly 170 lbs of tension near lockout.
- Bar plus bands for 8 reps
- 135 plus bands for 3 reps
- 225 plus bands for 3 reps
- 315 plus bands for 1 rep
- 405 plus bands for 1 rep
- 425 plus bands for 1 rep

On back and shoulder days I start with lat pulldowns at a 45 degree angle and pulling straight to my chest. I then do dumbbell rows followed by reverse-grip seated rows and finish off with seated chain rows.

Here is a sample workout:
LAT PULLDOWNS
100 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps
200 pounds for 8-12 reps depending on how I feel
200 pounds for 8-12 reps
200 pounds for 8-12 reps

DUMBBELL ROWS
(I do these by lifting both dumbbells simultaneously)
100 pounders for 8 reps
110 pounders for 8 reps
120 pounders for 8 reps
120 pounders for 8 reps

REVERSE GRIP PULLDOWNS
150 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps

SEATED CHAIN ROWS
I supinate my wrists as I perform the movement. My wrists are pointing directly up at the point of peak contraction.
250 pounds for 8 reps
250 pounds for 8 reps
250 pounds for 8 reps

My shoulder work consists of face-pulls on the lat pulldown machine. I consciously squeeze my traps and rear delts on each rep. I follow that with high shrugs and rear delt dumbbell raises.

FACE PULLS
A "face pull" is performed very similarly to a standard pulldown to the front. The difference is that you pull directly towards your nose. This makes the movement into a rear delt and trap exercise. Be sure to lean back at about a 45 degree angle.
150 pounds for 8 reps ~ squeeze each rep, keep it nice and controlled
150 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps
150 pounds for 8 reps

HIGH DUMBBELL SHRUGS
This is a unique movement I like to employ. The major difference between it and a traditional shrug is that you bend your elbows so that your arms are at roughly a 90 degree angle at the peak of the movement. This allows for a tremendous contraction of your traps. You also want to lean forward just a bit during the movement to further accentuate the contraction.
75 pound dumbbells for 12 reps

75 pound dumbbells for 12 reps
75 pound dumbbells for 12 reps
75 pound dumbbells for 12 reps

REAR DELT RAISES
(one arm at a time)
35 for 8 reps
40 for 8 reps
45 for 8 reps
50 for 8 reps

AL: Do you intentionally train to failure on any of your exercises?
MW: I never intentionally go to failure. On my assistance work I like the last few reps to be difficult.

AL: What brought you to using this routine at this time in your career?
MW: That is easy; it was the group at Westside that changed everything for me. I first went to visit Westside and Louie Simmons in June of '04. Prior to that I had trained like a bodybuilder for most of my career. One of the first things Lou told me was to quit reading the bodybuilding magazines. He then proceeded to educate me on the nuances of Westside training and to simultaneously incorporate them into my training. This included the aforementioned emphasis on rear delt and upper back work.

Lou does occasionally try to get me to squat, but I tell him I squat every morning to read the paper... It's good for a laugh and then I get back to training.

AL: Most of our readers are not at your level. Do you feel that the routine you are using is applicable to them or would you recommend something different for beginning to intermediate benchers?

MW: The way I train is totally applicable to all levels. You give it your all on ME days and always try and set a personal record. Once you hit a personal record get off the bench! On DE it is all about building that explosive power with speed work. Hindsight is 20/20, but I must say that I totally wish I would have gone with Westside back in the mid 90's when I first started

lifting. It would have saved me a lot of heartache!

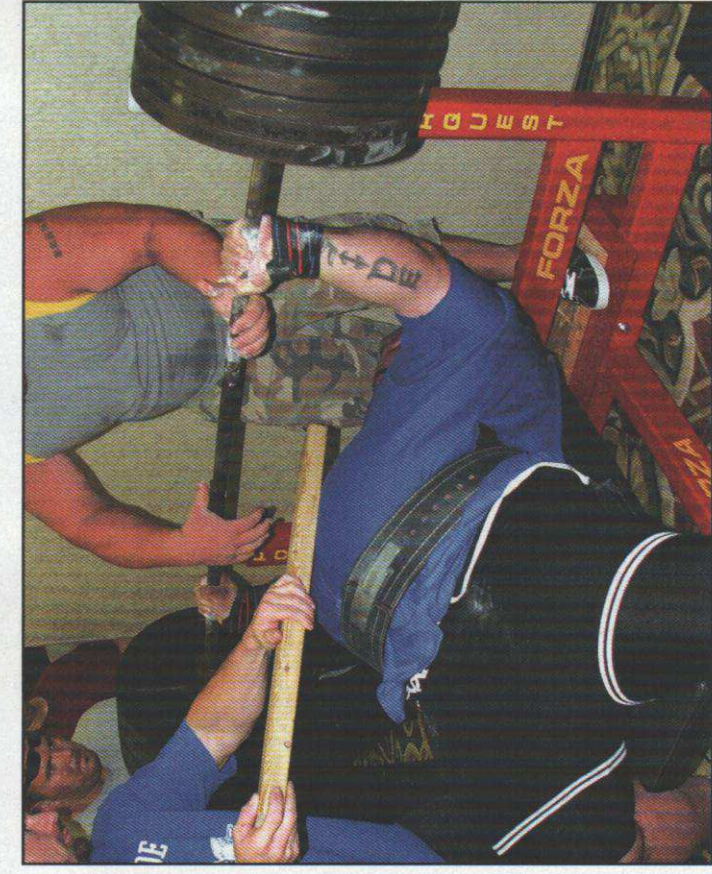
AL: If someone did not have access to bands and some of the more exotic equipment what routine would you recommend?

MW: That is easy, lots of triples. That is how I trained before Westside and I got my bench to 600 pounds without any type of special equipment. I bench about 6 working sets then did some heavy triceps work which consisted of heavy triceps extensions with dumbbells and V-bar pushdowns. I have always loved triceps training so I did tons of it and I believe it actually paid off when I did move on to the elaborate equipment like bands, boards, and

chains.
AL: Mike, you are one HUGE man. You certainly haven't always been this big. Did you consciously bulk yourself to your current proportions and if so, why?
MW: After my first run in powerlifting I took up bodybuilding. I dieted from 340 pounds all the way down to 235 pounds! I looked DAMN good! I could see my abs and all love being BIG. I love being able to sit down and eat a plate of Hooters' wings and drink a huge glass of Mountain Dew and not feel self-conscious about it.

After my diet and subsequent decision that bodybuilding was just not for me I quit lifting all-together and really let myself go badly. I ballooned all the way back up to well over 300 pounds. I still had some muscle but nothing like I did before the dieting. At that time it did not bother me. I had found a new passion and it was competitive paintball. There I was; an overweight but happy guy. One day a friend asked me to go to the gym and help him out. That visit rekindled my desire to train so I started back at it. I never dieted to trim the body fat I had gained so now I'm this BIG, HUGE, FAT guy with BIG muscles.

AL: What is your take on weight gain with muscles?
MW: Give us a sample daily diet. For instance, what did you eat yesterday?
MW: Hahaha, do you really wanna know that? Yesterday was Sunday, ME day in Columbia. I drove 2 hrs one way to train and left my house at 5 am. My first meal was at roughly 5 A.M. and it consisted of 2 bacon, egg, and cheese breakfast biscuits, a Fifth Avenue king-size candy bar, and a giant 44 oz Mountain Dew! My second meal was at McDonalds around 9:30 A.M. after my training session. I had 2 orders of sausage, gravy, and biscuits, a bacon, egg, and cheese biscuit, and 2 large Cherry Cokes. I got home around noon and had a protein shake then did some errands. I hit the Quikie-Mart while out and got a



Board Presses are part of Mike's workout and warmup program for the bench press.

AL: Mike getting ready for his 835 bench at the World Gym/ASC meet respect to being as strong as possible? Do you feel that additional body weight is the only way to truly maximize one's strength potential?
MW: No, I don't think you need to be 400 pounds and as big as a house to have a big bench. That has already been proven. Kellum just did 800 at around 220 lbs. That is insane!!! That said; the extra weight has never hurt my bench. I will find out first hand if the extra weight truly benefits me after my next meet because I will be dieting down to the 308 class. Hopefully I can do it right and maintain all my strength. Time will tell...

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