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## WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



### Interview with Clint Smith



LA: This is Luke Allison here with the [CriticalBench.com](https://www.criticalbench.com) weekly Muscle Building Expert Interview Series. Today I'm here with Clint Smith. Clint, how are you?

CS: Doing good.

LA: I definitely appreciate you joining us. I want to talk a little bit about power lifting today, but I want to give you a chance to sort of introduce yourself and say whatever you think people should know about your background.

CS: All right. I'm Clint Smith, train in Jacksonville, Florida with Team Samson. I've been power lifting competitively now since 2004. I post a training log on EliteFitness.com. I also answer questions and moderate the forum on [CriticalBench.com](https://www.criticalbench.com) forum. I'm just looking to keep training and keep increasing my lifts and my total.

LA: Now, I think your last meet, if I'm correct, was the Florida State meet back in February.

CS: Yes, that's correct.

LA: How did that go for you, before we get into specifics?

CS: It did not go as planned. You know, I bombed out of the squat and still ended up doing the other two lifts. A lot of people, including myself, a lot, if you bomb on a lift you'll kind of just chalk it up for the rest of the day. But, it was a state meet and I had trained for a couple of months to do it, and wanted to kind of see through my other two lifts and complete the training cycle with the max day on the other two lifts. So, I went ahead and benched and deadlifted, too, even though I bombed out on the squat.

I was able to get a small PR on the bench. I benched 810, which was a 5-pound PR for me, from my previous meet that was in December. And then deadlift, I pulled my opener, 725 and I didn't pull any more than that. I had two other attempts, but didn't register good lifts.

So, still, you know, came away from the meet with a PR on bench. But, I've been trying to break the 2,500-pound barrier with my total for a few meets now. I was frustrated I didn't get it that time. But, you know, I'm still healthy, didn't have any injuries during the meet and I've just got to go out there and try to get it next time.

LA: You had, what I guess people might refer to as sort of mixed results. You had some technical issues with the squat and the deadlift, it sounded like, but then a bench PR. That's a lot to sort of process.

CS: Yeah, well, I mean, some of it is just that's the way it goes. There are so many variables that go into competing in a power lifting meet and making sure you're ready,

especially for a multi-ply competition. Number one, your training has to be on par. You have to have had a good training cycle and made PRs throughout the whole previous months of training. On top of that, you have to ensure that you're not over-trained coming into the meet. Sometimes you can have an excellent training cycle, hit all kinds of PRs on various lifts that you've been training, and then show up at the meet over-trained and weaker and have a bad result.

You've got to make sure that your diet is key, leading up to the...during the week of the meet especially. And that's magnified even more if you're trying to cut weight, cutting weight to get into a lower weight class so you're more competitive. It could really thwart everything if you had great training and were coming in strong, but then you didn't dehydrate or rehydrate quite correctly, and that saps some of your strength. You could have a bad result as well.

Additionally, your equipment. We all try to get the most out of our equipment and we try to use as tight of equipment as we possibly can. There's two edges to that sword. It's got to be tight enough to give you the most support and pop, but that also means that it's going to be harder to control and your form on that given day has to be great in the gear.

So, it is really great and a great accomplishment when you can get all of those phases together and peak at a meet in every aspect, be it your training cycle, being rested, having a good nutrition and having good form and using the gear correctly. When all those come together, it's a great sense of accomplishment to have a great meet result like that. But, most of the time, one or more of them isn't quite on, but the other factors, you manage to get in good enough shape to still have a good meet.

Unfortunately for me, I kind of feel that I was just having technical issues in the gear that day and I just didn't get it done on the platform. I felt that I was rested, just gauging by how my warm-up sets felt, and just how overall I felt. I felt rested and I felt fine, just didn't get it done.

LA: Understood. The part that you described about the managing all of the different variables, I mean, sounds a lot like experience and then knowing what doesn't have to change, sort of going forward. Does that make sense? Would you sort of make major changes moving forward for your next cycle?

CS: Well, I have made some tweaks to my training, but I don't think that they were any of the main things that I've changed as a direct result of me bombing out on the squat. Like I said, really I just bombed out on the squat because I didn't squat well that day.

But, one thing that I noticed during the meet day and leading up to...my training partner, Brian Carroll, makes fun of me a lot because I tend to shake a lot. And I think that on squat and deadlift that has to do with the fact that I feel my hip stabilizers are weak relative to my other muscle groups. And I've never really focused on increasing my hip stabilizer strength, other than just squatting and deadlifting. So, that's one thing is, I've added in a lot more band work with abductor and adductor type movements to increase all those small hip stabilizer muscles.

So, hopefully when I get back into my next meet training cycle, those will be stronger and I'll be more able to hold myself in position when I get down in the hole on the squat, and be able to dunk it down there smoother and not have that shaking. It will tend to get you out of position.



LA: I think there was a video that Mike Robertson, when he was out at Elite not too long ago, where he was talking about those little stabilizer muscles. I think he was talking about lower lats and rhomboids. But, you find a lot of people, like yourself, where you have hundreds of pounds, close to 1,000 pounds sometimes, you're strong and everything looks like it's fast and it's going okay. But, you really have these little

muscles that are not being worked. Is that weird sometimes to sort of think about it and try to process?

CS: No, not for me, because I experience it firsthand. Like, with the hip stabilizers, I think I'm pretty familiar with how it feels to get down in there and feel that instability from the underdeveloped stabilizer muscles. And then, as soon as I get out of the part of the movement that relies on it more and say get to the lockout, and then it flies right up.

And one thing that I relate weak stabilizers to, kind of more with what you're referring to with Mike Robertson is, all those stabilizers in the shoulder at the rotator cuff joint. I've come to recognize that when my shoulders start to develop sort of that tendonitis feeling, that achy feeling, that a lot of times it's due to issues with my stabilizers, as I believe people alluding to.

That's when I take a step back and usually it's because I've neglected doing rotator cuff warm-ups and stretching properly. And when I start doing that again, it will make the situation improve.

Also, I'd recommend anyone that's having problems like that, to find a physical therapist or a chiropractor that can help you pinpoint specifically what stabilizers or what groups are causing your issue. There's one, Dr. Ramey here in Jacksonville, Florida, she's really good at kind of probing around and investigating and taking you through some movements and doing some tests on you to see what you need to work on or stretch or rehab in order to make the whole area in better condition.

LA: I think that's absolutely right. One of the things I would really sort of bet on in the future is more physical therapists sort of getting involved. Not necessarily just with power lifting, but more with athletes in general, because traditionally they've been seen as just for rehab. But, I think they're pre-hab, especially for sports. It has not been utilized. So, that's something that....

CS: Yeah, and if you neglect it over a period of years, then that's when you end up getting permanent injuries, like permanent back injury or knee injury, is when it goes neglected for so many years. You allow those imbalances to develop and really, really get deeply entrenched, I guess.

LA: Right. Or, just the ability to correct it and sort of enjoy whatever performance, additional performance you would get. So, both sides.

When is your next meet? Do you have anything scheduled at this point?

CS: My next full meet, I plan on doing that SPF Power Station Pro Am that's in Cincinnati. It's like considered by me and many others to be the multi-ply meet of the year. And I'm looking forward to going there and hopefully performing well.

In between now and then, I'm going to do a couple of little bench meets. I like to...I think that it helps to push your bench up by doing bench meets kind of more frequently than your full meets. That can help push your bench up just by giving you a goal and giving you something to focus on. I don't do it as a rule, it's not like I always try to do a certain number of bench meets. But, when there are some in the area and my training will allow for it, I'll go down and bench.

There's going to be one in New Port Richey, end of May, I'm going to go do. And actually, Team Samson is putting on a bench meet in Jacksonville this July. The information for it is posted on Brian Carroll and Adam Drigger's training log. I recommend anyone in the Florida area or Southeast to come check it out, The North Florida Bench Shootout. We're looking to get a good group of people, have a pretty good number of top lifters from the area that are going to come compete at it. I'm going to go there and I think we're going to have some people from Orlando Barbell and also Tampa Barbell, just to mention a couple, that are going to come and bench at it.

So, those are the two bench meets that I'll be doing. And then, like I said, I'm going to do the meet in Cincinnati, which is going to be in August.



LA: Okay. So, just the end of summer.

CS: That's all I got planned right now.

LA: Okay. That's what I asked. Fair enough.

CS: Yep.

LA: What about the sort of bench meets specifically? I know those are probably a little bit more available and happen more often as opposed to like a push/pull or sort of a raw meet or any of the other permutations.

CS: Bench meets are the most popular. You tell someone you lift and they say, "Well, how much do you bench?"

LA: Sure.

CS: And bench meets are usually any full powerlifting meet you go to, there's going to be a bench-only division. So, yeah, I definitely agree. They are the most available, and you just compete in that one lift. It's just like what you would do at a full meet or the bench portion of it. You have three attempts and that's it.

And that's the reason why you can, like I said, I will do more of them from time to time, because it's not an all-day thing, not all three. You can just go and get your three bench attempts in and you're done.

LA: Right. You're not there absolutely all day.

CS: Yeah.

LA: How often do you like to compete? I know some people have really sort of blocked, yearly plans where they're...I'm going to two meets a year. What does a year usually look like in term so how often you like to compete?

CS: I usually try to do one big meet a year, and then maybe one to two meets in my regional area. Like, Brain Schwab at Orlando Barbell puts on two meets a year. And that's only a couple-hour drive for me. So, it's really not too big of a deal for me to go down there and do his meets. He puts on good meets and that's kind of what it's been for me the past few years, is one out of state meet that's a national level meet, and then a couple of meets closer to home.

But, what also happens is...just say that's three meets a year. Well, maybe one of those meets you got frustrated and you didn't have the result you wanted. So, you get home from that meet and you go on the internet and try to find the very next meet that you can do. So, sometimes that can increase to five or six meets. It kind of has to

do with how your training is going as well. But, I try to keep it to three meets a year or so, a full meet.

LA: Okay. That's one thing that I've noticed has a really sort of wide variety in terms of what people like to do. Some people like...they can't do it unless they have 16 weeks to do a training cycle and some people are like, well, I'm ready to go. I'm about 90%; let's go.

CS: Well, that kind of has...like I said, with how your training is going. Sometimes you can... In training, strength gains are most of the time not really linear. So, you might have changed up your training and got great results in all three lifts and your competitive lifts, or say your best meet result is maybe a lot lower than what you actually feel capable of or are capable of at that time. And so, you might do two or three meets fairly close together because you're trying to just get it...put it all together at the meet and not necessarily... You don't necessarily need to gain that much strength, you just got to put all your lifts together to get the best result you're trying to get.

But, you'll probably find over time that as you do get to where you feel like you've had your best day at the meet in all three lifts, you kind of need to sit back, have a long training cycle and gain some more strength in order to increase your lifts or your total. So, it kind of has to do with how strong are you versus what's your best meet to date?

LA: Right, which that could be an entirely different conversation. That can get complicated.

CS: For me, I feel like at this point I just need to get stronger. So, I'm not in a big rush to do a bunch of meets, because I don't really feel like I'm going to improve much on my total until I address my weak points and just get stronger overall in each lift.

LA: Yeah, and hearing that from you probably means the rest of us can get stronger, also, as we go, can always get stronger.

CS: Strength is like wealth. You can always have a little more.

LA: Right, right, definitely. That brings up an interesting question. I tend to think of powerlifting a lot as a sport for people that are interesting goals and chasing numbers and things like that. But, if you reach a specific number, whether in one of the lifts or a total, I think you mentioned 2,500. Would you ever stop? Would you say, "That's enough," and retire?

CS: I think that there's definitely some point at which I'm going to start thinking about at least pulling back on the competitive aspect of it. I don't really think I'll ever stop lifting, and probably will never stop competing with myself. But, I really don't know at what point that is right now.



For me, what drives me is number one, just to continue to improve in strength and continue to get better. But also, you know, I like to try to see how high I can get on the all-time lifts, and I got a ways to go on them. But, I would think that just trying to think about when would I kind of start to lose that competitive desire, you know. Well, it would probably be if you ever make it to the top and there's not really anybody challenging you, which I'm definitely far away from. But, you still have yourself at that point. So, I don't know. Maybe injury is when I'll stop. Who knows.



LA: That's when it happens, possibly. We're talking about lots of weight and lots of poundages over sort of long periods of time. That could be...

CS: But again, your body adapts to that, your bones, your tendons, your ligaments. They all adapt to that over time and as long as you make sure that everything is working in tune and in harmony like it's supposed to, like we were talking about going to see your therapist, making sure you're not letting imbalances or problems continue to worsen or develop and you keep everything in line. Then, maybe injury never comes.

LA: That would be nice. That would be sort of interesting, if anyone ever does that without any injuries, let us know. That's pretty impressive. Getting a little jealous here, if that actually happens.

Do you have a normal training week or training split that you follow?

CS: Yeah. I have three heavy training days a week. Each day is a lift. Train lifts, not body parts. So, Monday is bench day, and then Tuesday or Wednesday I will train deadlifts and lately I've been training deadlift just in my garage. Saturday is when we all go and squat at Adam Drigger's...he created Team Samson and that's where we all meet to train.

Adam trains, Team Samson trains, bench and deadlift over there in North Jacksonville as well. But, due to my job and the driving distance, I usually just make it there for bench day and squat day. If a meet is coming up, I will tend to deadlift there as well. But, usually if I'm off-season deadlift training, I'll just take care of that at my house in my garage. But, it's good, when you need it, to go and deadlift up there, because you get a little synergy from training with other people, a little increased intensity and have someone to check your form, make sure your form is in check. So, I tend to do that when it's meet time.

LA: Sounds good.

CS: One more thing. Also, since my last meet, I started adding in some more assistance days. I think that was one of the other problems I identified after I kind of reflected on how training has been going since my last meet. I just felt like I kind of got to the point where I was only training the three lifts and I wasn't doing much assistance work. I wasn't doing much general training of my body as a whole. I think that might have been one of the reasons why my stabilizers got weak.

So, I've added some sled days where I'll just go out and pull the sled in my back yard. And I also added an upper back day, because I never really trained... I haven't really been training my upper back seriously. I'm not trying to train it heavy or anything, I just think I might lack a little upper back mass that could help me out in all three lifts. Strong lats and traps and rear delts help all three lifts out and just add stability, especially on bench, having a nice, big traps and big lats to lay down on and bench off of can really help your bench out.

LA: I think definitely the sled and the upper back work are pretty constant. You see that a lot as just a facet of the sport, the stabilizing effect.

CS: I was just completely neglecting both of those. I wasn't pulling any sled and I wasn't really having any weight training sessions outside of the three main lifts. And

those sessions were pretty much just focused on heavy doubles and singles for squat, bench and deadlift. So, I think I'm training more of my body, more of the muscle groups consistently than I was before.



LA: Probably one of the keys when listening to that is most likely there are as many ways to get to where you're interested in going, as there are people trying to sort of go there. It doesn't need to conform. If it's working for you, then it's working for you. That's sort of what I'm hearing. Does that sound right?

CS: Yeah, I mean, there's not one set routine or one set plan that everyone should follow. Really, it needs to be based on you and your weak points. What are you good at? What are you bad at? Okay, let's really attack what you're bad at and stay good at what you're already good at.

LA: Right. Not to confuse the two. Something else I find interesting for people that are sort of very, very into powerlifting is, you obviously lift weights, but how do you explain what powerlifting is for people that ask who don't know?

CS: Usually I just say it's bench, squat, deadlift, and add them up and see who has the biggest total. But, the main way that I try to let people know is like I'd already mentioned. We train lifts, we don't train body parts. I think that's one of the main differences between your average weight lifter going to the gym and a powerlifter...and even a bodybuilder.

LA: Just for someone who maybe knows a little bit more than that, where does the sort of explanation about the gear come in and the single-ply and double-ply and different federations and all of that?

CS: Well, there's just not one unified sanction and body with powerlifting. There's lots of different federations that put on meets. I don't really have a preference for one federation over the other; I just try to compete in meets that are put on my federations that are, you know, reputable and that way you want to go to a meet that is sanctioned by a federation so that you can register your lifts. You need to lift in a sanctioned meet in order for your lifts to count. And that's key for me. I work really hard to increase my personal records in the lifts and I want it to be a sanctioned lift that was judged by judges who had to be certified by some federation. So, that's as much as I care about the federations.

And as far as the gear, different people have different preferences for gear. Gear, when you're talking about powerlifting gear, just compare that to different classes of motor cycle racing or automobile racing. You've got Indy Car, you've got NASCAR and then all the local racetracks, they have tons of different classes based on engine size and car make and whatever. Some people prefer to lift single-ply because that's just what they got exposed to the most, I guess, or whatever. People like to compete raw without any gear. And then there are people that like to compete multi-ply, which is multiple plies of gear.

To each his own. I just...I compete in an area and with a group of lifters that have always preferred multi-ply, so that's just what I know. But, the main thing is, when you go, when you compete multi-ply, compete against other multi-ply lifters so it's still competitive. Raw compete against raw; single-ply compete against single-ply. So, just choose whatever set of rules that you prefer and go try to get competitive and beat your best.

LA: I think that's actually a really good explanation, the sort of stock car, motor cycle racing, sort of analogy. There are certainly plenty of choices, but then there's also an idea that I've heard, something like almost like a triple crown where you would have people competing across the different divisions in raw, single-ply, multi-ply. Does that interest you at all? Or, do you think there are so many varieties because people want variety, not because they want to be constrained?

CS: So, the first question was, have I considered maybe doing other types of lifting like single-ply and raw?

LA: Sure.

CS: Yeah, I've thought about it and I would like to maybe do a raw meet in the future, just to see how I do without any of the equipment. But, it's just... It's not like a very strong desire. I like lifting multi-ply, and I would need to really just take some time from multi-ply and go all raw for a nice, long training cycle in order to be prepared for that type of competition. And I'm really just focused on increasing my best lifts in multi-ply right now, and I don't want to take away from that by going to raw right now. Maybe at some point in the future I'll be ready for that.

What as the other question?

LA: Well, there have been some ideas at different points about sort of where are the strongest people at a given weight class. What are they doing, and the idea of getting those people together as opposed to...

CS: I think I might get flamed for this, but I think if you look over the past few years, the best lifters, by and large, compete multi-ply. And that's another reason why I want to go where the stiffest competition is, to see where I stack-up. I think that that tends to be at multi-ply meets right now.

I'm not saying that there's not plenty of strong raw people and single-ply. There's plenty of people in those federations that I don't hold a candle to. But, I just think by and large the strongest and most competitive type of powerlifting right now is multi-ply.

LA: I think a lot of that just depends on what you're trying to sort of get out of the sport. And if you're getting sort of what you want out of it, I think we can probably put the politics aside and whatnot and just watch people move weight, which is what it's about.

CS: Yeah. I respect them all, you know? So, I just...I'm a multi-ply guy.

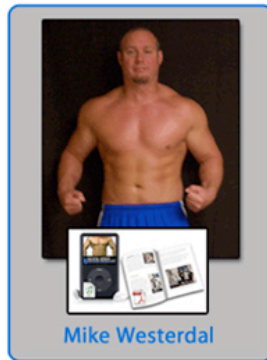
LA: Fair enough. Good deal. Clint, I definitely appreciate the time. I think you mentioned sort of where people can find you online. Run down that again just in case people are more curious than they were.

CS: All right, yeah. I post a training log on [EliteFitness.com](http://EliteFitness.com) and I also moderate the [CriticalBench.com](http://CriticalBench.com) Muscle Forum, and you can contact me through either of those. And you can also find me on Facebook, just type my name in.

LA: Very good. I appreciate it. Thank you again.

CS: All right, thank you. Bye bye.

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Mike Westerdal



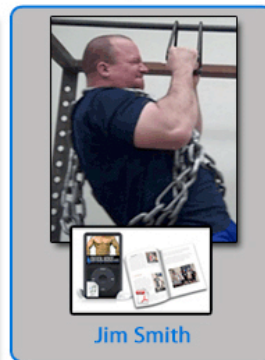
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