



WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Luke Alisson Interviews Jared Bachmeier

LA: This is Luke Allison from CriticalBench.com and I'm here with Jared Bachmeier. Jared, how are you?

JB: I'm good. How are you?

LA: Doing good, thanks. Thank you for stopping by, first of all. Tell the listeners a little bit about your background, sort of what sports you're involved in and give them a little bit of an inside into who you are.

JB: I've basically been doing sports since I was 3 or 4 years old, and pretty much anything that I could get competition in. That's what I kind of went towards. I played basketball, football, baseball and track all through junior high and high school. And after I got out of school I didn't really have a whole lot left as far as organized sports.

I've always been into lifting since probably the beginning of high school. And then I just kind of heard about power lifting from like a buddy and kind of took interest from there. I went to my first meet, I think it was in '03 and I've kind of been hooked ever since.

LA: So, would you say more interested in the weight lifting and the strength rather than the sports? Or, was it just kind of both at the same time?



Jared Bachmeier

JB: I always lifted to help me be better in the sports. So, while I was doing them I was into being somewhat light and agile and fast and stuff. But, now that I'm not really into like the sport side of it, I'm more interested in just strength, gaining strength, getting better at benching. I've been training lately for like the squat and the deadlift so I can do a three lift meet here sometime in the near future. So, I've just kind of gradually been expanding from just getting strong to bench, to kind of get my whole body.

I enjoy doing that. I enjoy helping and training other guys and helping them get better, too. That's always fun to see people progress and see gains from them also. I'd rather see myself, but it's also fun to help people out.

LA: Now, one of the things we wanted to focus on in talking to you was the bench press. And the idea seems to be you want to be good at something, go to those that are really good and sort of seem to have the [technique down for the bench press](#). Talk a little bit about that.

JB: Well, when I started, I didn't train very smart. I didn't really know what I was doing all that well. I've always been strong, but not what I needed to be, like a top caliber person for like a national meet. I was always decent at benching. I grew up in Spokane. I was training there and then I ended up moving down to Reno and I started training with Chad Aichs and a few of the guys that he trains with. After being down here for about six months, I went from like a mid 500 pound bencher to like a low to mid 700 pound bencher.

Your technique in benching is way more important than actually just being strong. So, my knowledge of how to train, technique and the actual lift of the bench press has changed tons. My actual max bench has gone way, way up.

LA: Now, you mentioned training with Chad. For people that don't know who that is, talk a little bit about how strong he is and how important it is to have a group like that. Because, people seem to think that you can train and be really strong by yourself, and that just doesn't seem to be the case.

JB: It's possible. You can't say that you can't do it. But, one of my main problems up in Spokane was I trained with people that were okay at benching, but none of them really knew how to tell me that I was doing something wrong. And if you're doing something wrong constantly, you're never going to get that much better and move forward if you're stuck doing like a wrong movement or a wrong type of training.

So, as soon as I got down here, Chad, Scott and Ethan are like the three main guys that I train with, and they're all super-knowledgeable at every lift and they're also all three good at all three lifts.

So, you've got Chad, which he's like as big as a house. He's gone like at 2733 total and he's benched I think it's 821 in a meet. So, hearing and having someone coach you that's one of the best at what they do, definitely helps.

So, if I do something wrong during a workout or training, whereas in Spokane I never really got told when I was doing something wrong. Whereas from those three

guys, they're never short on words and they always tell you exactly what you're doing wrong and they definitely make sure that you know it.

So, anytime you can take what you're doing wrong and fix it, and if you have a weakness that's causing you not to go forward in the bench press or in any of the other lifts, those guys make sure that I know that so I can fix that and not do it anymore. Or, make sure that weakness becomes a strong point in whatever lift I'm doing.

LA: Now, a lot of guys seem to think that it's Monday, it's time to flop on the bench, throw on 135, maybe 185 and just do a couple of reps. How wrong is that in terms of an approach, in your experience?

JB: Well, it all depends on what your goals are and what you're trying to do. I'm a firm believer in you're not going to get stronger unless you handle and lift maximum weight for you, or sometimes even more weight than you're capable of, as long as you get the weight in your hands and you try it. If you can, while you're taking it down, if you're strong enough where you need to be to take it down in control and to the right spot, even if you can't press it back up. You're still going to be training your central nervous system and your body to be able to handle heavier weight.

So, by handling light weight, you're never really going to gain a whole lot of strength. You might gain endurance and be able to do more reps with that weight, but you're probably not going to every increase the actual weight that you're able to press.

LA: Now, aren't there certain sort of techniques that a power lifter would do things like arching, getting back up on your trap, tucking your elbows, that really sort of make a difference not only in terms of how far you need to move the bar, but how much weight you can handle?

JB: Yeah, definitely. Like your setup and stuff, before you even start benching is like key. I always tell people, if you start in the wrong position, it's that much harder to finish the lift in the right spot. I don't look like it, but I actually have fairly long arms. So, I put my arms out, laying flat on the bench, I probably have close to a 20 inch range of motion. But, like you were saying, if you tuck your shoulder blades, get as high on your back and your traps as you can, get as big of an arch as you can, and then tuck your elbows. I usually try to touch, if I'm doing a raw, I touch around my first ab. If I'm in my shirt, I usually go down and try to touch around my second ab where my abs, I'm able to push them up a lot further than my chest. So, yeah, you're actually... I can probably take like a good 10 to 14 inches off my bench stroke. So, if you're handling a maximum weight, you definitely want to move that as short as you possibly can.

So, there's definitely a lot of bodybuilders and guys that just bench just for fun and stuff. They'll bench with their elbows out using more pec and shoulders and they'll

touch at their pecs, somewhere around that area. There's not anything necessarily wrong with that, but you're using your pec and shoulder muscles which are a lot more susceptible to injuries and tweaking stuff. Whereas, if you bench with an arch, tuck your elbows, take the weight a little bit lower, you're not going to be able to take the weight as low as you will in a shirt, but you can still somewhat get it a little lower and that takes a lot of the stress off your shoulders and your pecs and it puts it more on your lats. And your lat is a lot bigger and it's a stronger muscle than your pec and your shoulder has the chance of being.

So, anytime you can do that, you use your lats more. So, in training you're accessory work, you have to really, really hit your lats hard, different motions and get them strong enough to be able to use them correctly while benching like this, or you're not going to be able to bench like this effectively or very heavy. So, when benching like a power lifter, you normally will use more lats and then triceps towards the top of the lift and the lockout. Whereas, a lot of people that just kind of bench for fun use a lot more pec and shoulders.

LA: Now, if you have someone come to you that was sort of interested in being much better at the bench press, they were going to change their form like you just described, they were going to do the prescribed assistance work. What does a workout look like that they would be doing? Is it three days a week? Is it one day a week? What's the volume like? Go into that for a second.

JB: Well, like the first thing that I always tell people that I either start to help or if they want to start training with me, is I tell them, when you start benching like me and like power lifters do, you're not going to be as strong as you were benching your old weight, because you don't have those muscles built and conditioned yet to be able to handle heavier weight.

So, the person's got to know that and they have to be okay. They've got to put their ego to the side for a little bit and know that they're going to be a little bit weaker to start off with, but by 4 to 6 weeks in the training, they're going to be right back to where they were and shortly after that they're probably going to fly past their old max and start moving onto heavier weights with a lot less chance of getting injured or tweaking a pec or shoulder.

I generally in the gym twice a week. I do my legs and I have a max effort heavy leg day with some other back and a little bit of shoulder work on that day, that's on a Monday. And then on Thursdays that's when I bench normally. Usually I try to train heavy, in my shirt, every week. I don't do full range pressing very often because it tends to be a lot harder on my body and a lot harder to recovery from. So, normally I'll work down to like a one or two board, which you can do in a shirt or raw.

Normally, I have a heavy set that I work up to failure normally on the bench. And then I will do a heavy tricep workout along with the bench, right after that. Normally either a close grip bench off of a four or five board and then I'll alternate it up every week to change things up. Sometimes I'll do incline dumbbell tricep extension. I'll do presses, which I normally do in like a Smith Machine where you keep your elbows tucked, bring the weight down towards your face, similar to the skull crusher, but it's more towards the bench press side than the tricep side.

I always try to do like one heavy tricep workout right after benching and then I will also train my lats really heavy. I generally try to think of it as like any of the muscles that I'm really using for bench press, I try to train them all in the same day so they all get hit really hard and then the rest of the day I have time to let those rest up and recover and get ready for the next week.

So, I try to hit my lats after tris then I'll go to my upper back, which is also super important in keeping your shoulder blades tucked. And if you're under a lot of weight, those have to be strong enough to keep your shoulder blades tucked under the heavier weights. I'll do like face pulls, some dumbbell rows, some seated rows with cables. I'll do like my light shoulder accessory work with cables, like lateral extension and then a little bit of rotator cuff work. And then sometimes, I'll throw in like a shoulder press with dumbbells or a bar.

LA: Okay. I can see and probably listeners can to that this can get pretty involved. This can get sort of as serious as you want it to be in terms of program. If someone is maybe sort of not as familiar with those exercises and they're not very good with the bench press, say they're struggling with 135 on the bar. Are you going to have them look at maybe pushup variations, maybe a floor press variation, maybe some dumbbell presses first as an introduction?

JB: Not necessarily, because like recently, I started training a little tiny guy. I actually work with him. He wasn't able to bench 100 pounds, I don't think. I think we were starting like with a bar and some tens, I think, for a while. Now, he's super skinny. After like four weeks, I had him benching 135. He was able to do that for like a rep or two.

Like, the main thing that keeps people from being able to lift just starting out, that keeps them from being able to lift moderate/heavy weights for them is their weak in the other areas that need to be strong with trying to bench. So, you can only start out light and I always tell people, the lats are one of the main important things for benching. So, in the beginning weeks, I try to get them to hit their lats as heavy as they can. I'll normally have them hit them twice a week so they can try to get them jumpstarted and able to keep up with the benching on how they're trying to do.

If you're weak, you're not going to be able to just jump in and start benching a lot of weight, but I think you can always benefit in getting used to benching the proper way, is also a huge thing. Most people, when they first start out, they're not used to taking the bar down a little bit lower, tucking their elbows and that sort of thing. So, I think the reps, getting the reps in even if it is with lateral weight, that's generally going to help them get used to it and get comfortable with taking the bar where it needs to go, even if it is light weight. They just need time to get used to it.

LA: One thing I think that I definitely heard again and again is the importance of the lat training. That's something that I've come across from several different people who actually will advocate a 2:1 pulling to pushing ratio. Is that something that you think is probably appropriate?

JB: Probably, yeah, because normally I'll train my lats on bench day. I will go with a wide and a narrow grip. I'll do those sets as heavy as I can. And do like three or four sets on my bench day. And on my leg day, I'll hit them again with just a wide grip and I'll go a little bit lighter and just try to get a few more reps and work on technique a little bit better, and squeezing it hard at the bottom.

One thing that I try to do is I gear all of my back work around my bench. So, when I do my lat pulls, I lean back a little bit further than normal people do. I will try to tuck my elbows while I'm pulling the weight down, like you would benching. I try to pull the bar down to my second ab while I'm doing them all. So, all of my rowing and pull-downs and things like that, I try to keep as close to my bench form as I can to try to mimic that. So, I'm strongest right where I need to be with my bench form.

Your lats, like I was saying, like you just mentioned, they're, in my opinion, the most important thing for benching either in a shirt or not. There's one thing I think that helps me bench a lot more in my shirt than most people, is I have really, really strong lats. And in a shirt, it kind of helps tuck your elbows in for you and allows you to kind of cheat a little bit and use a little more force and not try to tuck them in so hard, because, the shirt helps a little bit.

So, when you start benching raw, you don't have that shirt to help pull your elbows in, but it's all you and you have to make sure that your elbows are tucked in and the only thing that's going to hold them there is your lats. So, I notice when I take a little bit of time off from benching heavier raw, I was just in my shirt for the most part and I kind of slacked off on my lats a little bit for like a month or so. When I try to bench raw, my raw bench was way down because I wasn't able to hold my elbows and stuff in as I normally could have, because I kind of slacked a little bit on my lats.

It's like, once you know how to keep your elbows tucked and use your lats properly, you can definitely tell right when they start getting weaker, or that's like your

weak point. Because, as you're lowering the weight, if they're not strong enough to keep your elbows, in they're going to flair and then you're going to lose the lift right there.

LA: Now, on the days or the workouts where you're working with sub-maximal weight, what type of method do you like? Do you work with a certain percentage? Do you work speed or dynamic effort? Or, do you do repetitions? Explain how your workouts go and why you do what you do, basically.

JB: I don't really every do speed work or dynamic work. I usually just go pretty much heavy all the time. I don't normally use a percentage. Like, on my bench, I always just try to work up to failure, which is normally around eight. And before I put my shirt on, I'll work up raw to either between 405 and 450 for like a set of three and I'll be like two sets there. So, I'm in the process of getting my raw bench back up to where it needs to be for me to be able to handle eight in my shirt. So, I've been trying to get like two sets of three in with above 405 before I shirt-up, trying to get that back up to where it needs to be. Because, like I mentioned, it was kind of getting a little bit weak and the higher my raw bench is, I think the easier it's going to be for me to handle the heavier weight in my shirt.

There are days where I feel like I just don't have it, which could be I'm just tired or it could be from overtraining. So, normally, if I feel like I'm having an off day, I'll just kind of go up and workout for like 6 ½ maybe 700 on a bench and I'll just call it good there.

As far as my leg stuff goes, I normally try to push it fairly heavy, but while I'm lifting and the weight feels a little bit heavier than it should, I'll kind of just back it off a little bit, take it easier and then use that as somewhat of a light day to rest up for my next day or the following week.

LA: One of the things that I noticed, following power lifting, and maybe not everyone can relate to this is, different people seem to have different problems with the same lifts. Do you find that you can follow other people's training and maybe that gives you insight into cycling in different exercises?

JB: Yeah, definitely. I think that's where most people get a lot of their workouts from, is from other people. Usually that comes from other successful people that are towards the top in whatever lift or training that they're looking to be doing. The more ideas and stuff that you can get and use those in your training, the better off you're going to be and the more variety and the more you change it up, the more you're going to keep your body guessing and that's going to allow you to get better at each lift. I think that's one of the main things that makes most of the really good lifters, good lifters, is they are able to either themselves or their coaching point out where their weakness is and fix that.

So, if you're having a problem towards the lockout of the bench, you want to work off two or three, maybe even a four board, depending on how long your arms are and how long your bench stroke it. And everybody's shaped differently, so no two people are going to lift the exact same.

So, you can't say one set form or type of technique for lifting is going to work from person to person. You kind of have to find out what works best for you and makes you as efficient and as good at doing that movement as you possibly can. Like I mentioned before, it's hard to do that on your own. So, the better people you have around you to help you and tell you what you could do better or what you're doing wrong, I think that's what makes the good people stand out from the best people, is when they do know that they have a weakness or a problem. Either them or their people around them tell them that they do have a weakness or a problem and how to fix it.

LA: You mentioned board pressing from various heights and sort of when you would incorporate that. I'm curious if you are a fan of lockouts, doing them in the rack and setting that at different heights using the static overcome by dynamic. Is that something that you like or are not really a fan?

JB: I don't normally do like a whole lot of lockout training because that generally is like a strong point of my bench. I'm normally really strong and fast off the chest. And I can normally, after I get my elbow staring to flare towards the lockout, if I get to that point, then I seem to be able to lockout weight fast also. I used to have a problem...weight would come off my chest and it would slow down and if I were to miss a lift, I would miss it right around a two board. So, that's why I started doing lots of two board work.

After a while of doing two board work... Because anytime you have a weakness or a slow point, I think you can benefit by starting from a dead stop from that point and then concentrate on pressing from that point. Like, if you go down and touch your chest, you have the momentum from your chest to the two board area. So, that's not going to really show that you have a weakness. But, if you start from that point from a dead stop without the momentum, if that is a slow point or a weakness, you're going to have a hard time getting that bar moving from that spot.

That's why I started training that and my two board actually started becoming really, really strong. And then, I stopped having that slow point or missing a lift right at that point. I think anytime you're going to look into using boards or lockouts from a rack, you need to look at if you are missing lifts or you can feel that the bar tends to slow down in a certain area, you want to train that portion of the lift.

So, if you know you have a weakness locking out, you can get the weight from your chest to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark of your bench really, really fast, and then you tend to slow down or miss lifts at the lockout area, I think you can definitely benefit from doing 4 and 5 board pressing. Maybe using a close grip bench with your benching off of a 4 or 5 board. Or, doing rack lockouts from like 2 or 3 inches down from being fully locked out, and use more weight than you think you can do. Just try to work up to failure or get as heavy as you possibly can and try to get your triceps and that portion of your lift caught up so it becomes not a weak point.

You can also look at speed training or how to get more speed off your chest. Because, anytime you have more momentum and speed carrying you through the lift, that weak point is going to be that much easier to get through if you have a lot of speed going through that. So, I think that's another thing to look at, also. If you find yourself slowing down or having a weak point, if you can get the bottom half or under that faster, it will make that point that much easier to get through.

LA: Listening to that, it sort of reminds me that sometimes we can be a little bit sort of simplistic in saying, well, maybe your weak point or your slow spot is at the bottom or at the top. And so, there's this really sort of small list of prescribed exercises. But, I think, like you mentioned, you can be weak at a two board or a three board or whatever, sort of in between. And that it's sort of not only important to realize that, but sort of make the adjustments and maybe sort of see how people with similar problems try and fix them.

JB: What were you asking?

LA: I think possibly people maybe overlook the fact that they could be sort of good at the bottom and the top, sort of off the chest and lockout. But, maybe they have a weight that's slow in the mid range and they're like, I don't understand. I'm good at the top and at the bottom. It seems like maybe that's a complication that kind of gets left out sometimes.

JB: Definitely. That could have been why I was stuck at where I was for like a year or two, because it's tough to see yourself while you're benching. And if you don't have the coaches there or the guys that you train with, they're going to point out that hey, you got the bar moving really, really good off your chest, but around the two or three board area you slow down quite a bit. That's makes the lockout that much tougher.

Or, if you're missing lifts and you tend to miss them around the same area every single time, then they're definitely going to point out that yeah, you may not miss lifts all that often, but if you're slowing down at that point, that creates that much more of a chance for you to miss the lift either there or shortly after. Because, you generally want to get that bar moving as fast as you possibly can from your chest, and continue that

speed all the way through the lockout. And that's going to make the whole lift that much easier.

So, just because you're good in one spot and good in another, it doesn't mean that you're good through the whole entire lift. So, that's why you kind of need good people around you to be able to kind of watch and point out if you do have a slow or a sticking point, where it is and the best ways to fix that.

LA: As you talked about, you sort of train heavy most days, more days than days that you train light or moderate. What goes into sort of preparation? Do you drink anything? Do you try to sleep extra? Do you have a routine that you follow just to sort of get whatever it is up so that you can handle heavy weights?

JB: I don't really have anything that's out of the norm. I always try to get eight hours of sleep before, like the day before I lift. I always try to get lots of water and food in my throughout the whole entire day so I don't go in hungry or dehydrated. The whole, like training heavy every week, it took my body and my central nervous system probably like a good six months to get used to handling heavy weight every week.

While I was getting into trying that, because I wanted to get in my shirt and handle heavier weight more often. So, I worked on that and I found that like the first day that I benched heavy, I would hit a good, heavy lift. The following week after that, I'd be down like 25 to 50 pounds. And by the 3rd week of going heavy, I was shot and totally worn-out and I was slow, was missing lifts I hit easily two weeks prior to that. That comes from overtraining and your body, your central nervous system not being able to handle that much volume, that heavy, that often.

So, it took my body and my CNS probably a good six months to be able to handle that week in and week out and not suffer any speed or weight that I'm able to press. And now, my body seems to recover a lot faster and I'm able to go in week in and week out and hit within 25 pounds of my normal max on whatever one, two, three, four inch pressing. It doesn't really matter anymore. I'm able to handle the maximum weight and not suffer from it.

LA: Well, I think we're about out of time. I do want to remind the listeners that Jared has a training log that you can visit at Critical Bench Muscle forum, and he's also written a couple of articles. Is that right?

JB: Yep. I've got quite a few, between five and ten. And a lot of those go into what I've been talking about as far as like your setup technique, getting the most speed and stuff off your chest. I try to gear most of my training around shirted benching, but a lot of that can carry over to your raw bench, also. So, it's not really set that you have to

train in the shirt to benefit from my types of training or techniques. It can benefit pretty much anyone.

LA: That about does it, Jared. I'd like to thank you for the time and the willingness to share some good information. I really appreciate it.

JB: No problem.

LA: All right, take care.

JB: Okay. Bye.

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