



WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Mike Westerdal Interviews Steve Shaw for CriticalBench.com

MW: Hey everybody. This is Mike Westerdal of CriticalBench.com. We're here with your [weekly muscle building expert interview series](#). I'm pretty stoked today. We've got Steve Shaw of MuscleAndStrength.com on the line. The topic we want to talk about today is beginner training for natural muscle and strength. That's building muscle and strength at the same time and what's some good strategies for doing that would be for beginners.

So, like I mentioned, Steve's with MuscleAndStrength.com. He's their content manager. He has spent the last 23 years studying strength training and bodybuilding. When he started out lifting he was 150 pounds, he could bench press 95 pounds. Now, he's grown into this monster that helps other people get big and strong.

Hey, Steve, thanks a lot for being on the call. Why don't you go ahead and tell us a little bit about yourself in case I left anything out.

SS: Sure, Mike. I was a pretty typical teenager. I had my concrete weight lifting set and I played around with that for like three years and made no progress whatsoever, as most of us do. When I went off to college, I went to real small school in New Mexico and they had a really nice weight training facility, and no one ever trained there. So, I got to play around a little bit by myself.

I fell under the tutelage of an English professor there by the name of Dr. Michael Gilbertson. He taught me the most important lesson of my life, and that was, you need to squat. So, he taught me how to squat and I use some of his tips still today when I squat. But, ever since that day I've been training hard and heavy and went from your typical small, bone-skinny guy to a fairly strong guy for my age and size.



Steve Shaw pictured to the right in his CriticalBench.com tshirt

MW: How old were you when you started training?

SS: I was 18, first year of college when I first started seriously training.

MW: How much do you weigh now, if you were 150 pounds then?

SS: Let's just say I weigh a little bit over 250 right now.

MW: Wow! So, you put on a good 100 pounds of good size. That's awesome.

SS: Yeah, I've gone up over 270 at times. But, I'm trying to get down to 220 right now.

MW: Yeah, definitely a balance.

So, what do you do at MuscleAndStrength.com? You're the content manager? What's that like for you? Do you have any favorite things you do on the site?

SS: Absolutely. One of the great things about Muscle and Strength is I get to work with natural athletes. I appreciate the pro side of the sport, but I get a change with Muscle and Strength to help promote the natural side, and I get to interview the naturals, do podcasts with the naturals, profile the naturals, put their articles up. My favorite part about that is that I get to give the average beginner some realistic expectations, what they can expect to accomplish regarding strength gains and muscle gains as opposed to staring at a picture of Jay Cutler and thinking, how in the heck am I going to look like that, or what do I have to do to look like that. So, that's really my favorite thing about working with Muscle and Strength.

MW: Yeah, that's cool. I remember being in high school looking at those pro bodybuilders and until you've met some people to talk to you...and the internet wasn't around back when I was in high school. That's kind of getting old, showing my age there. But, you look at those pictures and you actually think that's possible. You're like, all right, if I just workout real hard for like a year, maybe I'll look like this. So, setting those expectations is really important. We'll talk some more about that in a little bit.

I first just want to check what's going on with you lately. Reading your bio, it said you were training for 100% raw power lifting. Then, I think you mentioned you're also training for bodybuilding competition. So, where are you standing with that now? What do you have coming up this year?

SS: Well, for most of my life I've just been like an average Joe, just training and enjoying it. But, I'm approaching 43. I really feel like I'm peaking as far as strength goes and from a bodybuilding standpoint, I've always wanted to try at least one show. So, last year I was training for 100% Raw Worlds and my grandmother passed away. So, I had to kind of put that on the back burner.

This year, I'm training for my first bodybuilding show in April of 2011, the Natural Ohio Classics. I'm hoping to come in as a heavy weight in that show. If things work out, I'm also considering competing this year in 100% Raw Worlds. But, I'm not sure if that's going to happen or not. We'll see if my wife lets me.

MW: Right. So, how would the training defer when you're training for the bodybuilding show versus for power lifting. Or, is it more of a diet issue?

SS: I train the same. I'm more of a power builder at heart. I train for bodybuilding and power lifting at the same time. I never really train any different. My training right now, I have people telling me, "You're a power lifter, not a bodybuilder. Why aren't you training like a bodybuilder?" But, I train heavy compound lifts, very few isolation lifts, hard and heavy, a lot of low reps and it's never let me down for muscle mass. So, that's the way I like to train and I stick with it.

MW: Yeah, that sounds close. I'm sure a lot of the people on the call feel the same way. You want to get strong, but look good at the same time, just like a power builder, like you said.

Focus in on some of the beginner mistakes. What are some of the biggest myths that you think beginners fall for during their quest for adding muscle size and strength?

SS: I think the biggest issue with beginners is that they don't... I don't know if you'd call this a myth. But, they don't believe they have to lift heavy to pack on muscle. I mean, obviously one of the biggest problems with beginners and guys that are at gyms is they don't eat enough to pack on muscle and strength, or they don't eat properly to pack on muscle and strength.

But, I think one of the biggest issues or one of the biggest myths is that they don't believe they need to get strong to get big. I don't know how you get big without getting strong. So, that's an issue I face every day with some of the new guys, just trying to tell them, "No matter how you train, whether it's Mike Mentzer's Heavy-Duty System or Dog Crap Training, you got to get stronger." It doesn't matter what system you're using, you've got to get stronger.

MW: Definitely, I 100% believe in that same thing. That's what I say in my Critical Bench program. Use the big, heavy compound movements, do your lower reps, get stronger and your body's going to have to adapt and grow muscle to compensate for that. So, I'm totally on the same page with you on that. And the food, for sure, too. People think they're eating a lot when they're not. You've got to eat a lot of food to grow.

SS: I can tell you, Mike, one of the things I'm sure you run into is that you see this myth running around that low reps or lower reps don't build muscle mass. I have a buddy by the name of Max Misch who is...I think he competes as a power lifter at like 165 or 170. He's an absolute house. He just posted his picture today and it's just amazing the amount of muscle mass that these power lifters have, yet they never train in a bodybuilding style. So, that's another big myth: you can't get big if you use low reps.

MW: Yeah, that's true. What do you think is the best way to split up your body parts for training? Power lifters typically have a day for each of the main lifts, a bench day, a squat day, dead lift, sometimes speed days where bodybuilders traditionally will split up their training based on body parts and body part splits. What do you think is the best way for a beginner that wants to pack on both muscle size and strength? What kind of split would you recommend?

SS: For a pure beginner, I am a really big fan of using a full body approach. Something like squatting and benching on Monday, having a focus on Wednesday on dead lifting and overhead presses. And the maybe on Friday, either squatting or front squatting and doing close grip bench presses.

If I had a beginner to train, those would be the staples of the Monday-Wednesday-Friday full body approach. Just exercises, heavy pressing and posterior chain exercises as the core, and very little direct isolation type movements. I'd throw in barbell curls on one day, calves on one day, abs on one day just to appease them, so to speak. Because, it's hard for some of the young guys to train and not have their beach work in there. But, definitely heavy compound lifts. I'm a real big believer in the old school, full body style of training, especially for a beginner.

MW: Yeah, I'm on the same viewpoint. I'm just wondering, with an advanced trainee, that's when you start giving your body more rest before you hit the same muscles again. How come a beginner can handle full body workouts several times a week? Is that because they're doing less sets or because it's only three days a week? Why do you recommend the full body?

SS: Well, for a couple reasons: number one, they aren't using heavy weight, so it's not taxing things like their central nervous system as strongly as an advanced lifter. I don't want to be mistaken and have people think I advocate a lot of volume on the Monday-Wednesday-Friday approach. When I look at training, whether you're training on a split or on a full body approach, I look at the same weekly training volume.

So, if you're on a bodybuilding split, doing 12 sets a week, you know, one day a week. If you're on a full body routine you'd be doing something like three or four sets a day for that type of body part. So, it's the same weekly volume, it's just a little lighter each day. I think a beginner is able to handle that more just because they don't have the strain from the heavy weight.

MW: That makes sense. So, as far as reps go, would you start them with a little bit higher reps just to get the movement down and make sure their form is right? Or, what do you recommend for the reps?

SS: If they're a rank beginner, I would have them doing 10 rep sets, somewhere in that range, just to get the form down. I like a little bit of a break-in period before they start going full bore on their sets, of a month or two so they can get those stabilizers muscles accustomed to lifting.

So, basically, the first couple of weeks, 10 reps sets, and then the next month or so have them slowly, slowly add weight just to get the feel for each individual exercise. Like on bench, maybe they're starting out at 95 pounds. As you add like five or ten pounds a week, you can start to get a feel for what your limits are and when the lift starts to become taxing. So, I like to have them slowly transition up the weight scale until they find something that's starting to really tax them or work them. And then from there, I'm a big fan...once they get to that stage, I'm a big fan of starting to push for like five rep sets, move along those lines.

MW: Yeah, those are great.

SS: Rippetoe or Bill Star, that sort of thing.

MW: Yeah, five by fives, that's a great balance between what typically people think will build muscle versus getting stronger. It's a nice medium number there.

As far as your personal routine, you're advanced now. What is what you're doing compared to what a beginner would do? Tell us a little bit about your current routine.

SS: My current routine would be extremely confusing to anyone who is just a beginner to lifting. Because, I, right now, basically just train how I feel every day. I dabble a little bit with the methods that Strongman Doug Hepburn used. He did like eight sets of like two reps, resting two to three minutes between sets, and he would slowly progress over an eight to nine week period, adding one rep per workout, to eight by three.

So, I do that quite a bit for like bench and squats. Dead lift, I just kind of go in and see how I'm feeling that day. Some days I train heavy, some days I train lighter with just like 405 and just try to do some reps.

I basically just structure everything around the four major lifts: bench, dead lift, squat and overhead press. I use those as the staples, use some assistance work like Romanian dead lifts, close grip bench. But usually, I only do three or four exercises per workout, and I basically just do however I feel each workout.

MW: How many workouts a week?

SS: Usually it fluctuates between four and five. Lately, I've been experimenting with working dead lifts together with Romanian dead lifts and putting them on their own day,

apart from back work like barbell rows and dumbbell rows. So, when I train that way, I have my own dead lift day with Romanians and dead lifts and that becomes a five day split. But in general, just a four day split.

MW: Okay. Where do you train at? Do you have some training partners and stuff? Do you think that's important?

SS: I train in what I call the Dungeon, which is my basement.

MW: I thought you were going to say that.

SS: it's a nice little location filled with spiders and cat vomit and all sorts of foul things.

MW: You don't want to get too comfortable. That's good.

SS: No, no mirrors, definitely no mirrors. I train in my basement. I have a pretty minimal setup: a squat rack, a bench unit and a bench on wheels that rolls around. I'm so accustomed to training by myself that I train that way. I know my limits and rarely ever take a set where I'm...even if I fail, I have everything set up so it will catch me so I don't die.

MW: You said you're married, though, right?

SS: Yes, yes.

MW: I was just thinking, you work from home, you workout at home, you do your interviews on the phone. If something were to happen to you your wife would find you though, right?

SS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, she definitely would.

MW: All right, cool. I don't have to worry about you then.

SS: No, no.

MW: So, next question. We were talking earlier a little bit about expectations and what's realistic for people just starting out, working out. How much muscle mass do you think a beginner can put on when they first start out? like you said, you were 150 pounds when you started. How fast did you start gaining muscle, at first?

SS: Man, I gained it faster than I can even...than I ever could have imagined. I was just a twig. My wrist size was like 6.4 inches. So, I'm on the lower end of the scale as far as bone size. In a year and a half, when I came back home from college, people were asking me if I was on steroids. I think I gained 20-25 pounds of muscle in my first two years of lifting.

I think if I had somebody to train from scratch that I could easily get them 20 pounds of pure muscle in two years, even if they were what they consider a self-proclaimed hard gainer. I'm pretty confident that I could squat them into some growth, squat and dead lift them into some growth. I'm pretty confident, 20 pounds in two years. I think that's doable.

MW: That's my dog going crazy at the door.

SS: That's all right.

MW: Go ahead, sorry about that.

SS: No, I was done. That's it.

MW: Yeah, 20 pounds, that's definitely a lot of muscle to put on.

SS: Well, if they would follow my eating program, too. That's a big "if".

MW: Yeah, I know. It's tough making people eat. I remember force-feeding in high school, drinking this stuff called Mega Mass, weight-gainer shakes and stuff.

SS: Oh, Lord.

MW: I was puny in high school, too, like 155 pounds, trying to gain weight to play football.

SS: Please tell me that wasn't make by GNC.

MW: Oh, man, I don't remember.

SS: That would have been some nasty stuff then.

MW: It was bad. They didn't even have like good weight-gainers back then. It was really gross.

SS: Oh, they didn't even have good protein powder back then. I couldn't imagine what a weight-gainer would have tasted like. I was pretty lucky in college. I always went to the lunch room at the end of the eating periods and for some reason, down in New Mexico, they always had cheesecake for dessert. So, I would have my big meal of burritos and whole milk and then the lunch ladies would always tell me, "Eat! Eat the cheesecake." And I had no problem complying. So, that was my bulking food.

MW: That's funny. At my college, at Central Connecticut, they used to have entire pies that were on the rack. They'd cut them into pieces and put them on plates and I would just like take the whole pie and stick it in my backpack. That works. I was doing so much running and lifting with football, I was still staying lean. It didn't matter.

SS: Yeah, exactly. In college when I made all these gains, I would literally go and play basketball for an hour after lifting. There was no, “should you do cardio before or after lifting or first thing in the morning” or “hit or lit” or any of that crazy stuff. You just went out and ate like a fool and exercised.

MW: Yeah, you exercise like crazy, you lift weights, you just play and have fun and I think that works a lot better than trying to restrict your calories and time exactly how much cardio you should do. I think the more you eat the harder you work out, it all evens out.

SS: Yeah, a lot of these guys are trying to micromanage things down to, should I clean bulk at 300 calories above, blah, blah, blah. You can definitely go that way, but I’m a firm believe that if you want as fast of gains as possible, there’s not need to burden yourself with like calories. You don’t have to eat like a pig either. But, no need to turn yourself into an obsessive-compulsive right out of the gate.

MW: Even cheesecake probably isn’t a good recommendation for anybody out there. There’s bad weights you can put on, too. So, try to eat the clean foods like proteins. Get your carbs and your unsaturated fats, too. Stay away from the sugars and the saturated fats and things like that. Just try to get good, quality food, not so much of the desserts and stuff we’re joking around about.

SS: Yeah, exactly. Guys that tell me they have a hard time eating enough during the day, now I tell them, number one, whole milk. Number two, grab some almonds and snack on them when you’re hungry. And if you want a nice dessert, get yourself some natural peanut butter and some dark chocolate and just slap them all together and you can have a few hundred calories without...it’s a little healthier than eating cheesecake at least.

MW: Yeah, for sure. How much are you eating now? You said you’re trying to lose weight. Have you been trying to keep track of your calories or are you just trying to eat a little cleaner?

SS: You know, I’ve been in the lifting realm for so long that I can’t not track calories on a daily basis. It’s just a mental illness. But, usually I eat 2,400 to 2,600 a day and that will cause me to lose two to three pounds a week. Which generally, you’ll hear bodybuilders say don’t lose more than two pounds a week, but I can pretty much do whatever I want down to about 220 and I won’t lose any muscle. So, that’s a pretty safe area for me.

MW: You’re not losing strength while you’re eating less?

SS: Oh, no, not at all. I've been cutting weight all year and at the beginning of the year my strength gains were still going up. I've hit a plateau like the last three months, but I think part of that isn't diet related. It's more related just to me running linear progression into the wall.

MW: So, what about protein? How much protein a day do you recommend and what are some of the best sources?

SS: It's such a big debate how much protein you should intake. I think at minimum you need 150 grams a day. People will say 1 gram per pound of body weight or 1 gram per pound of lean body mass, or whatever. But, my general recommendation is I like to keep it simple. I just say 30 to 40 grams every 2 ½ to 3 hours. That's close enough for most people.

I don't have a problem with guys eating more than that. I'd rather see them eating a little bit more protein than trying to stuff an excess amount of wild rice down their throat when they don't really want it. But, at minimum, that's usually what I recommend.

MW: What kind of protein do you recommend?

SS: I'm a big fan of eggs. I live up in Wisconsin, so cheese of course, beef, first and foremost I like those types of proteins, milk. And then, also obviously chicken and fish. You have to throw that in the mix. I like to see the guys at least get three whole food meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner with some different type of protein source. Chicken, fish and beef, throw in a little glass of milk for good measure.

In between meals, a good casein protein. I'd rather see them do that than have a protein bar, if they could. But, sometimes protein bars are a necessity. And then, first thing in the morning and right after workout, whey protein.

Some of my go-to protein supplements on the road are like beef jerky. If you're traveling and you need something quick from a gas station. I travel quite a bit, so I rely on beef jerky.

MW: It's got a lot of sodium, but you can order the stuff, too, like some of the organic beef jerky and stuff like that.

SS: Yeah, I wish I was that prepared.

MW: Yeah, when you go to the gas station there's not much to choose from. It's like a Snickers bar, beef jerky or like hopefully they have a Muscle Milk or something like that.

SS: Yeah, exactly.

MW: So, do you have any other tips for beginners as far as eating? You had a few good ones already. Anything else you can think of?

SS: As far as eating...I like them to aim for at least a two pound gain a month their first year. I've said if I train a beginner I can get them 20 pounds of muscle in a couple of years. I'd like to see them at least budge that scale two pounds a month for their first year. So, if that's not happening, they've got to find a way to eat more. I'd rather see them eat a little bit more than a little less. Nothing can slow gains faster than under-eating.

MW: What about...I've heard people recommend getting up in the middle of the night just to chug a shake or something like that.

SS: I've never tried that. I'm sure that doesn't hurt the body. But, personally, I've never tried it. Back in my younger days, usually you'd eat pizza or something before bed. I mean, back in the day when I was doing that sort of thing, the protein powders were just horrendous. So, I tried to rely on whole foods and I never really got in the habit of getting up in the middle of the night and taking any protein. But, you can definitely do it, keep some casein in the fridge. If you get up to go to the bathroom, just slam some and hit the hay again.

MW: Yeah, back in the day we were probably going to bed in the middle of the night anyways, so it was more like waking up early to eat something and then going back to bed, is more like it.

SS: Exactly, just getting up for an 8 o'clock class was a strain.

MW: Yeah, I tried not to have 8 o'clock classes because I didn't want to end up missing too many of those.

SS: Yep, same here.

MW: Backtracking a little bit, you did talk about a beginner routine, but in general, how often do you think a beginner should vary their routine? How long should they stick to the same program before changing it up?

SS: I have a real strong opinion on this, and it's not a popular opinion. But, I stick to the same core lifts. I'm a big believer that if you stick to the same core lifts, the squat, the dead lift, the bench, the overhead press, maybe dips, close grips bench, barbell rows, that personally, I like to see them run that into the ground with linear progression.

I'm not a big believer in muscle confusion or the need to change frequently. But, sometimes some guys do need to do that, depending on their genetic predisposition

and just general back luck or some exercises they don't handle well, or just mentally stay engaged.

So, I have no problems with guys switching it up every few months just to stay mentally excited with what they're doing. But, is it needed...I don't believe it's needed.

MW: Now, if anybody hasn't heard of it, could you just explain linear progression?

SS: It's basically just routinely or systematically adding weight each week. Like when you're a beginner and you start out doing 95 pounds with the bench press. Say you're doing five reps for 95 pounds. The next week you'll try 100 pounds for five reps. This is the way I look at it. You keep doing it, keeping adding weight each week and when you can't get your five reps with the weight, you start pushing every week for more reps. You push, push, push until you get five reps, then you add weight. And you keep doing that until you can't do it anymore.

MW: Is that kind of similar to progressive overload?

SS: Yeah, absolutely. Always pushing yourself on every set, always pushing yourself on every set for more reps and when you can hit the recommended reps for a set, you just add weight.

MW: Yeah, that's the same thing I say in my programs, too. As long as you're improving on something, either weight or reps, each week, that's what you want to strive for.

SS: Absolutely. I'm a big believer in never wasting a set.

MW: What's your take on supplements overall?

SS: I've got to admit, I was once an anti-supplement evangelist. I used to say, "Aw, they're not needed. I don't need them, I don't want them," because, I made so many good gains without them. But, as I slowly started to experiment with them, I've found that there are some really good benefits to some of the supplements on the market currently.

I am a huge believer in products like [SciVation Xtend](#) with BCAAs and glutamine. That, as an old guy, really helps... I can really notice my bounce-back in between workouts improve. I seem to recover faster, my muscle soreness is reduced and it helps me train more frequently or harder.

I'm a big believer in essentials. You get your whey casein protein, then you add fish oil and a good quality multivitamin, not something like your Centrum, but something that you know is made by a good bodybuilding type supplement company. Once you got those foundations, then you can start adding in creatine. I think

everybody should at least try creatine. If energy becomes an issue, and we all have stresses in life where you don't always have 100% energy every time you're going to hit the gym because of school or work, there are a killer amount of pre-workout supplements right now that just do the job. So, that's the next progressive step for me. I'm addicted to pre-workout supplements, especially at my age.

MW: So, for that Xtend supplement you're talking about, that sounds like one of those like male enhancement...

SS: Yeah, it does kind of sound like that, but...

MW: What did you say is in that again? Glutamine and BCAAs?

SS: BCAAs, glutamine and a few other things, a few other vitamins.

MW: Do you feel like it helps with recovery?

SS: Yeah, it definitely helps. For me it helps with recovery and muscle soreness. Since I've been using it, I've been able to...you know, you usually have that problem when you squat heavy, that when you go to the bathroom the next day, you have issues sitting down. But, I haven't had extreme soreness since using that. So, it's a good quality of life supplement.

MW: Yeah, those are some good ones you mentioned. Since you are the content manager over at [Muscle and Strength](#), are there any...what's the latest stuff? Are there any new cutting edge supplements that seem to be getting good reviews or people are having good results with that maybe a lot of us haven't heard about yet?

SS: You know, the biggest one lately, the biggest supplement lately has been actually made by the company that makes [Xtend](#), the product we were just talking about, and that's SciVation. This product is Quake 10.0. It's a new pre-workout supplement. I've been using it for the last two months and I really like it. It jumped right to the top of my list as far as quality products go.

There are some other exciting things out there that really catch my eye. There's a supplement company called Betancourt Nutrition. They're coming out with a lot of products that are like gummy-based, like gummy glutamine and gummy creatine. If you've ever been a pill-popping supplement addict, you can really appreciate chewing a gummy bear instead of popping pills all the time.

MW: Yeah, that's pretty cool. It's actually pretty annoying to have to take like 10-20 pills a day.

SS: Yeah, exactly.

MW: So, what's in the Quake 10.0? Does that have like nitric oxide in it or what's in it that makes it good for pre-workout?

SS: It actually doesn't have nitric oxide in it. It's got a little bit of creatine, a little bit of beta alanine, which obviously are good for workout energy and pumps. It has some energy boosters, citric acid, caffeine, 1,3 dimethyl and other things like vitamin C, vitamin Em, ALA. It's got a whole cocktail of supplements. Quite frankly, I don't know how in the heck these scientists even decide how to put these things together, but the combination just gives me a good, clean energy and allows me just to keep training at my age. After an hour, I could do more if I wanted to, which is really nice.

MW: Now, do you recommend some of these supplements or some of the staples you mentioned earlier for people that are just starting out? Or, is that more for people that are a little bit more advanced?

SS: For a beginner, I want them to have a decent protein powder that they like. I would like to see them have a casein and a whey, just as a good available form when they need it. For beginners, I always say get your quality multivitamin and get your fish oil. I'm really a big believer in fish oil. I don't necessarily want them to jump into the deep end of the supplement pool. It's more important for me that they learn how to train and to learn how to eat and that they have a good nutritional foundation with their multivitamin and their proteins.

And then, once they learn how to train and they're making gains on the scale and in strength, then it's time they can start playing around with creatine and nitric oxide and things like that, just to enhance what they're doing already.

MW: Yeah, that makes sense. Now, there's got to be some supplements that you just know don't work or you're just not a fan of. Are there any ones that you kind of want to warn people about?

SS: Yeah.

MW: Are they just too hyped up. They're not as great as they seem.

SS: Yeah, you know, I told you I used to be a pretty big anti-supplement evangelist and I think we've all been blindsided by the bunk claims of 10 pound gains in 8 weeks or all that kind of nonsense. There are plenty of products like that out there on the market right now. To be frank, I couldn't even name any of them because I tend to just click through them. There's also some definite scammers out there in the market. But, basically, anything that makes an extreme claim of gains, I tend to stay away from. Gains come from training and eating, and supplements just help that process.

MW: Right. What about like the ones that have like steroid names and stuff like that?

SS: Yeah. Those you definitely want to avoid. I hate to generalize because I'm sure you can't say that just because a product sounds like a fake steroid that it's useless. It might actually have some good ingredients in it. But, you better be darn careful if it sounds like decabalderson or something. you want to make sure you know what's in it.

MW: Yeah, that's true. I agree with you there. So, what else is going on with your life lately? You got anything cool happening? You going to the Olympia this year or anything?

SS: I'd like to make it to the Olympia sooner or later. For me, right now, the exciting things that I'm involved with are traveling around to see some natural shows and getting to meet some of the natural athletes. I've been to three shows this year and doing a couple more, and I'm just really enjoying supporting the natural side of the sport and seeing the people putting in... Whether you're involved with natural bodybuilding or pro bodybuilding or power lifting or whatever, I'm just a big believer in supporting the sport because these guys need support. These are great sports and so many people like the sport and practice the sport, but don't go to shows or contests or support these athletes. So, I'm really enjoying doing that right now.

MW: That sounds fun. So, you go and what do you do? You take pictures and interview people and just kind of give exposure to the events?

SS: Yeah, usually I try to attend a show with somebody I know who's going to be competing. We'll do like a night before video interview and we'll do an interview right before they hit the stage and an interview after the stage, and that sort of thing. After we're done, we'll throw it together in an article and put it out there for public consumption.

MW: Sounds like a dream job right there.

SS: Yeah, it is. You have no idea.

MW: Cool. So, if you could just have everybody remember just one tip from this interview or walk away with one really important thing you'd like them to remember from this call, what would that one thing be?

SS: The one biggest tip would be never waste a set. Always push for more on every set, especially as a beginner. That might change when you become a late, intermediate to advanced lifter, but as a beginner, unless you're injured, always push for more on every set.

MW: Great advise, can't argue with that. Thanks a lot for taking the time and chatting with us today, Steve. Where can people get a hold of you or learn more about you?

SS: They can go to MuscleAndStrength.com and they can either meet me in the forum. My forum name is Steve, which is hard to forget. Or, they can look up the article section and find me. They can also contact me via email at Steve.Shaw@MuscleAndStrength.com. If there's any natural athlete, power lifting, bodybuilding, whatever, that want to do an interview or get profiled for the site, we'd love to hear from them.

MW: Awesome, man. Well, thanks again for all your tips. I'm sure everybody's really going to get a lot out of this.

SS: Thank you, Mike.

MW: All right, I'll talk to you real soon.

SS: All right.

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