

## **COMRADES!**

Since I watched the first video, I've always admired the dedication and strength of Adam Glass. It took a while for me to work up the courage to ask him some questions about my own training. Not sure why. Of course, when I finally nudded up and got to it, he was more than happy to work on things with me. Now that I've made so much progress, I'm sorry I waited so long.

This interview took place in about 90 minutes. Adam let me ask whatever I wanted, so I did. I had some questions prepared beforehand, but others came out of the natural flow of the conversation.

My original plan was to edit the interview heavily, but it was so good that I am presenting it here, about 95% intact. The only things I have omitted were some questions about my own training, which is far less interesting than Adam's. Also, when either one of us repeated ourselves too frequently, as happens in normal conversations, I've taken redundant words out to spare the reader and the typist (me).

Thanks to Adam for the chance to talk. Thanks to John Du Cane for providing our meeting place. And of course, thanks to Pavel. Without Pavel, Adam might have remained a merely "really strong guy."

Josh Hanagarne, May 21, 2009

## Interview with Strongman “Unbreakable” Adam T. Glass

**Josh:** Why is there so much conflicting information out there in the fitness world? Why so many different opinions? Is the diversity caused by marketers trying to find their own spin?

**Adam:** There are several sources for this...the first source is this: champions become living proof of what works. But the caveat is this: they know what works for them and they seek to make money off of that. So you get a guy who says “I’m going to write a book based on the Westside Barbell powerlifting club principles, because coach Louie Simmons, who I have tremendous respect for, has produced champion after champion with this system”

“So they can say that this is the Holy Grail of powerlifting, because you can do it this way. And at the exact same time, there’s another guy who says, “Here is the training of Ed Coan, who’s broken more records than anybody, and it doesn’t look like what you’re saying. So now you have a conflict right there. People turn the question into: “Who is right?” Instead of being a question of “Who is right?” it should be a question of “Which works better for *that* guy?”

Kettlebell training used to have a fairly diverse arena of what was right or what was contained within the one system. Within RKC a couple of years back, you had a variety of people doing a variety of different things.

You had Mahler doing bodybuilding, you had guys like Steve Maxwell and Steve Cotter training people for Martial Arts. You had guys like [Jeff] Martone training people for tactical application. You had others training people for fat loss...you had a huge variety of things to pick from.

As people went off on their different ways, each system became more specialized. What we see today is that you have Crossfit trainers who do kettlebells, but they train at the technical level. You have your GS [Girevoy Sport] guys who are training a sport technique and saying that's best.

You have the hardstyle principles training people for athletics in a non-specific way. There are more kettlebell certifications out there as well...when the question become "Who is right and who is wrong?" you're going to have a lot of failure going on. The better question is...which system is right for me to obtain **this goal**.

There is confusion today because there is a lot of ego in the game and there's a lot of money to be made. There's nothing wrong with money to be made, but people should be presenting the information ethically. Instead of telling people "This is the best way"

across the board, they should be saying “If this is your goal, this is the way you should be doing it because we’ve seen great success with it.”

I’m not a fan of people telling me this is the one way...nobody has a monopoly on the truth.

**Josh: So why is the hardstyle system right for you and what you do?**

**Adam:** There are elements of it that I find very very useful. They make it a system based on principles. The mistake people make is that they say the hardstyle training system is about kettlebells. I’ll say that is 100% incorrect. The kettlebell is a tool that is heavily used in the system, but the techniques that are employed when you teach someone to press in hardstyle could be taught with a dumbbell, a barbell, a sandbag, a sledge hammer, or a kettlebell.

There are specific elements within that...when they talk about the shoulder positioning, pressing from the lat, positioning of the body in certain ways versus if you said “This is the best way to press the kettlebell” as other organizations do...and they [other organizations show techniques that are very good for pressing a kettlebell, but they don’t translate.

The same way that you snatch a kettlebell by the hardstyle rules is the same way that you would snatch a barbell or a dumbbell, in terms of things you would do with your body.

You could not do the same things with other implements if you tried to do something like...for example, corkscrewing a kettlebell for a GS snatch.

I've been messing around with GS for a couple of months. I like it. It's a very challenging sport. Lot of mental effort. But there are techniques employed that are highly specific to the kettlebell. They are not training principles, they are training techniques.

So there are principles within the hardstyle system that I have found extremely beneficial for the things I do.

**Josh: You'd been on the Dragondoor forum forever before you actually got certified as an RKC. Why the wait?**

**Adam:** Since 2003, I've lived in Asia. 2003-2004 I was in South Korea. 2004 to the very end of 2007 I was in Okinawa, and most of that time was spent over in the Middle East. From Okinawa to Minnesota would have cost me about \$2600...on top of the cert cost...\$5000 minimum, not to mention that my job in Okinawa had me working tremendously long hours and I lived most of the time out of a suitcase.

I had a house where I kept my crap but I was very rarely in it. At the time that was another benefit of kettlebells. It's a lot easier to a 24 kilo kettlebell around in a rucksack no matter where I'm at, verses having to wonder: "Will they have a weightroom? Will I

have time to go to the weightroom?" I had a couple of times where I living in the back of a C-130 off of an island in Eastern Asia...sometimes I don't even know where the hell we were at exactly.

But I had my kettlebell with me when I was not posted. When I had some time, I'd knock out some snatches. You cannot beat that kind of convenience.

**Josh: You've written about the US military being underprepared physically. What does that mean? Does it mean that everyone isn't carrying a kettlebell around? Are they underprepared when they enlist? Does that happen later? Both?**

**Adam:** Observations from me...observations from friends of mine from other services...I think overall, your average 18 year old coming out of high school is underdeveloped physically. I think that's a huge problem. The American school system does not put enough emphasis on physical fitness like it used to.

They get in the service and...it's one of those things where people should come in [physically] ready to do their jobs so we can spend your time *teaching* you your job. The American taxpayers do not pay people to run obstacles courses or X amount of pushups. They pay them to be highly skilled in a certain task.

For example, maybe we have someone who works in a motor pool. The reason they get paid, day to day...is to keep humvees operational. It should not be their [instructors] problem to get that person in shape to do their job. They should show up that way.

A lot of people show up...and it seems that they expect us to spend a disproportionate amount of time getting them ready. I see a problem of there not being a lot of drive across the board for people to excel. This seems to be the pattern in one of two ways...they come in and get physically challenged.

There's the first type of person who says "I'm not ready and I need to better prepare myself." And those people work their butts off and they get better.

There's another type of person, though...they pick up an injury, the injury becomes the excuse...pretty soon this person is no longer truly physically fit for military operations. I think there has to be a cultural shift for people to once again truly relish being physically fit.

I do not think most people are where they could be. I've made it a purpose of mine to try and push people in that direction. But the immediate concern they always have when you introduce a new physical system is "Will people get hurt?" So back to the American taxpayer who is paying people to be able to do a certain task...if you end up hurting them with your training system, they can't do their job, so they resist change for fear of injury.

**Josh:** Even though the soldiers could wind up being more poorly fit to do their jobs, which could eventually put them in greater danger?

**Adam:** Absolutely. I'll give you an example: Crossfit has been very vocal about how they have established these gyms on various military installations throughout the world. They are very proud of what they've done...they've got Crossfit Baghdad, blah blah blah...

What they have noted is that there are many military installations where the installation commander has outlawed Crossfit-type workouts, specifically for the number of injuries that have been inflicted. I don't say that to bash Crossfit, I say that to indicate: if there is a trend that indicates that people are being harmed doing it, it will be outlawed.

I've been in installations where basketball was prohibited for periods of time because...there was a base where they had like 19 guys blow their knees out in a six-week period. This base had had zero combat injuries at the time. It puts the commander in a bind because...he has to keep his people physically fit, but he cannot allow them to get hurt.

That's why people stay with the tried and true, in my opinion.

**Josh:** Let's talk about Unbreakable Fitness. I imagine that in the gym you run, you teach the principles you're talking about right now. When did you start the gym and why did you start it?

**Adam:** I officially opened doors on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, 2008. I'm coming up on my year mark. Prior to that, I had been training a variety of people. I trained people at my house. What's funny is that when you guys see that equipment in my gym, all that s\*\*\*was in my garage.

The only thing that wasn't there was most of my little kettlebells. But all the rest of that stuff, I owned that previously.

**Josh:** So when I see the room in the videos, the gym where the wall says "Want Respect, Pay Here," any equipment in that room used to be in a garage?

**Adam:** Yes.

**Josh:** I've seen your older videos on Straight To The Bar in a garage. Is that *the* garage?

**Adam:** That's the garage. I'm actually in my garage right now. There's still equipment in here that I've got to bring over. The reason I specifically set up the gym is because my

garage is detached from my house. In North Dakota during the winter, it is quite routine to have days where the high is negative 20 and the low can be in the negative 50s or 60s.

In the winter of 2007-2008, I had workouts where I came outside and the warmest the garage would get, with two heaters running, would be ten degrees. I'm out here bending steel and lifting things, and with the garage that cold, I said "This can't be good for me." Obviously nobody wants to come work out in a place where it's only ten degrees, and that's on a good day.

I located a space where I could set it up. When I first opened, I said, "I'm only going to bring in people who are very serious." Basically I was looking to make rent so that I could have my own gym.

People ask: "How do you have time to do active military duty and run a gym?" You can, if you're very smart with your timelines.

**Josh: I saw on your blog that it says "Contact me and we'll see if you're ready."**

**What does it mean to be ready, and do you actually turn people away?"**

**Adam:** Unfortunately, I do have to turn some people away. Because of my limited time, I can't spend a lot of my days trying to coach people who are not that serious yet. Two examples:

Number one: you tell a person, “I want to snatch 150 reps in 10 minutes with a 24kg kettlebell.” They say “I’m not strong enough to do that yet. I tried and the other day I hit 120.” I can train that person. They just indicated to me that they have a desire to do it. They just have not been physically prepared to do it.

Versus someone who says, “Well, you know, that sounds really heavy, and I don’t know if I can ever do that, and that just doesn’t sound like something that would be for me.” There may be some problems with that person.

Some people just want the attention of the online coaching. There are trainers out there who coach people, who have no problem spending a lot of time working on somebody who doesn’t really want to do it. They collect their paycheck; they send some kind of training program. At the end of the day, most people will never admit how they’re paying for a trainer, but they don’t do the work.

I do not want to put my name on somebody who does not want to do the work. Their progress will be a direct reflection on my coaching ability. If they tell me they want to press a certain size bell, I will give them all the tools, all the information, and a proper template to obtain that press. If only works if they work...if they apply.

**Josh: You also do a lot of this same stuff online. For example, on the forums. Why not encourage the people you help for free, like myself, just to pay you for online training?**

**Adam:** I probably could have said “I’m going to train people 100% by pay.” The problem you run into right off the bat is:

Number One: Regardless of anyone’s opinion on why I do it, I enjoy taking 20 minutes to jump on different forums and see what people are up to. I enjoy seeing other people’s progress.

So for me, it is almost painful to see how someone is very close to the breakthrough but they don’t understand how to connect the dots between B and C to hit D. If there’s one thing I can say...it’s that if I can point them in the right direction and help them progress, it makes me happy.

But why not charge everybody? Because some people don’t have the means to pay, and some people don’t need the complete system. Some people only need a hint. You, for example. You do not need...with the direction you’re heading in, to have it where we’re setting up phone consultations several times a week...explaining very simple things...you kind of have your own path going...you might just need a nudge now and then.

Some people want to make tremendous gains, and they want to make them very quick. If they’re willing to put in the time and the resources to get me on the line to get them through it, I will.

I definitely have people I consider my personal coaches. They set time aside for me to be able to get online with them and we work through certain things I cannot figure out for myself. This brings up another good point:

Every person is an athlete. Whether they choose to acknowledge that or not, that's their problem. But if you think that only professional athletes need coaching, or that you can always just figure your own way out...maybe you can, but isn't it easier to get there with someone's help? Someone could find their way from Boston to Los Angeles just driving, but it would be a lot faster to talk to someone who's made the trip before. It comes down to how important someone's gains are to them.

For me, the next PR (personal record) is something that I highly value. Because of that, I am willing to put in an effort, do whatever it takes to figure out how to get there. There are people like that. They are highly interested in making progress, they just need a push.

**Josh: Speaking of the Internet and making it easier for people to get together online for any reason...I was doing some research on you to prepare for the interview. Two things became evident if you Google the name Adam T. Glass. One: you have a lot of devoted followers. And two, there are a lot of people out there who seem to hate your guts. What would anybody have against you?**

**Adam:** There are people in this world...the only thing they can contribute to society is negativity. It doesn't matter who someone is, there seems to be someone who dislikes that person. I'm sure you have people and you're like, "Hey, that person is great, they're always so happy," but then another person turns around and says, "I can't stand that person."

I'm no different. People get jealous. People get afraid. Some people are very close-minded so they may not like that I am direct with what I say. For some people, if you do anything that disrupts their world, they become very defensive. The people who dislike it: I don't care. I honestly don't.

**Josh:** I know that's true.

**Adam:** The bad news for them is that, if they are unhappy with me for something today, or yesterday, or six months ago that I said, they're really not going to like what happens tomorrow, maybe tonight, next month, because I continue to improve. I continue to improve my mind, I continue to improve my body. I continue to learn. I don't shut out things. I keep moving forward. If they don't like the things they see from me, well then, it's just like TV...move along.

The world is a pretty big place, and more and more people are in it. They really just need to get on with whatever they're trying to do.

**Josh: The Internet is making the world smaller in some ways. How is the Internet helping the strength community, and how does it hurt it, if it does?**

**Adam:** It definitely does both. In the United States of America, the predominant fitness activity in America was some kind of bodybuilding. So a person's immediate connection to "I want to lift weights" was a bodybuilding format. Many people did not know very much about powerlifting or Olympic lifting, even though they're both domestic sports. If you wanted to get to something more exotic, you pretty much had to know somebody who does it. It wasn't going to be covered in any of the magazines, which is how most people got their information.

The Internet allows crazy people to find each other and do better things. Like the [Gripboard](#), for example. There are not a lot of people in the world who have a serious interest in hand strength. Most of the people in that forum, without that Internet, would just be going along, doing what they do. Maybe they know somebody with an interest in it and between the two of them they talk out ideas and they eventually make breakthroughs.

With the Internet, we all get together. You can disseminate six years worth of advice in six minutes. We find all the common links between information and then we move on to a higher level. It's very much what the first telephones did for the way that world leaders could influence each other, versus having to send a courier.

The bad part about that...if someone is a coward or mean-spirited the Internet is where they can run free, because people operate without a name and without a face. They don't have to put their reputation on the line because they have their little screen name. It allows people to say and do things they wouldn't normally be able to do.

You look at the amount of hateful speech on the Internet and it is staggering...these people can operate with no consequence because nobody knows it's them. I've no doubts that there are people on the Internet spreading different hateful messages and then get off the computer and go play with their kids or go to church or do whatever...and nobody knows. It's kind of their own little secret world.

Anyone who's ever said anything bad to me has been on the Internet. I've never had anybody say anything with a negative connotation, face to face in a context where there may be real world consequences for those words.

**Josh: Like a lot of people, I originally got into weights during a bodybuilding phase. How do you feel about bodybuilding?**

**Adam:** Positives: okay, the first thing is that most people who think of bodybuilders are not thinking of bodybuilders as I see it. True bodybuilders, in my opinion, are the people who are going out and competing, which means there's a lot of dedication put into it. A

true bodybuilder is evaluating everything he puts into his mouth. He's measuring out his time and training intensity. They're trying to maximize their performance in the context of their sport, which happens to be how they look.

Someone could prepare very hard for a bodybuilding contest and lose because of an opinion, versus performance.

It's not a point scale where they can do something to increase performance. It comes down to: Does the judge like how they look? They have to work very hard.

In the bodybuilding community of people who are non-competitive individuals who lift in order to look a certain way, it seems that the knowledge flow has stopped. They have breakthroughs that the rest of the functional fitness world has known for years. One of them may finally figure out that "Hey, I make better strength gains and can therefore build more muscle mass if I would quit doing 80 sets of bench press today."

It has stifled information in that context. To me, the thought of looking a certain way, without being able to do the weight...looking like I'm strong but not being strong would be like if I sold you a Ferrari with a two cylinder Honda Civic engine in it. You'd be very upset with me the very first time you took it out on the road. You're driving a car that looks like a Ferrari but cannot perform like a Ferrari.

I don't understand why people think they'd have to choose between looking good and being physically active.

**Josh:** So you can become less athletic while looking more athletic.

**Adam:** Absolutely. And what comes with that, when you start to sacrifice the athleticism, you sacrifice things that are, in my opinion, very important for development. If a person says, “I don’t look better on a stage by doing certain key mobility things,” then they may start to pick up nagging injuries. They get a bad shoulder and say, “Well, that’s just part of the life.”

They get a bad knee and say, “Well, that’s just part of the life.” Eventually they get to a point where they’re a functional cripple in terms of their athleticism and you look at them and say, “Man, I just don’t get it. Here’s a guy who supposedly trains all the time and he’s a walking train wreck.”

That is where the negative part of bodybuilding comes in. If you take away the performance element of it, you take away a lot of the physical benefits of training.

**Josh:** Feats of strength and old time strongman stuff is about as far away from this idea of bodybuilding as you can get. How did you get into feats of strength?

**Adam:** The amazing thing is, there was a time in the world when the two were highly connected. During an exhibition somebody would demonstrate, in addition to how good they looked along with their physical talents. Early strongman-type competitions held in this country used to feature both physical contests of ability as well as how they looked.

You could not show up and just look good. You would get beat out because there were guys like John Grimek who were every bit as strong as they looked.

It's only been in the last 30 years that a major separation came out.

I had been deployed out to a base...was supposed to be there seven months...got extended to a year. I had just become so bored with what we did day to day. I really just needed something new. I liked to armwrestle. I started thinking, "How can I get better at armwrestling?"

During that search, I came across the idea of, "Hey, I'm going to try to bend steel. That seems like it would make me stronger." So I started to work on that. I got used to it pretty quick. By the time I got back to Okinawa I had picked up, probably, six or seven different feats. Some steel bending...I used to do a lot of nail driving. I don't do it anymore because it really causes me some problems.

From there, it's really just exploded with me. The more that I look for things, the more things I find. I tend to progress quickly with them because I've built a body that allows me to try to do these things. I have really really strong tendons because of training I used to do, which allows me to progress faster with a lot of the feats that involve heavy forces put on the wrists and the elbows.

I've never had an elbow injury, or a wrist injury, even though I do all these different things to myself. It's just one of those things. Success brings on more success. You try it out, you find out you're good at it, it makes you feel better...if something makes you feel better when you do it you're going to keep doing it. The things I do, the pain it causes me...it's all inconsequential to the reward it brings me.

Finger-lifting the other night, I tore a piece of skin off my middle finger about the size of a nickel. It bled for a whole day and has been a big pain in the a\*\* the last few days. But I don't care because I can lift more weight with one finger than most people can deadlift. It makes me happy.

**Josh: A friend the other day watched me do a kettlebell workout and said, "You know, I look at you and I don't think you're any different than those mopey teenagers that cut themselves. You're doing this because part of you just enjoys pain. It's weird." It's hard to communicate to someone who isn't doing it that the pain isn't the point.**

**Adam:** Absolutely. Like marathon runners. I have no interest in ever running a marathon in my life, but I understand why they do it. The average person would say, "Oh jeez, you want me to run 26 miles? There's no way!" And they automatically jump to all the negative things that would come out of that. And they probably never once considered what it would be like if they successfully ran a marathon.

In a show, I always have people try out certain feats of strength. I do it to help them understand what I do. I think for some people it helps them appreciate the difficulty of a feat. For example, horseshoe bending...if someone gives horseshoe bending an honest go for the first time, they will get some very serious pain in the side of their hip from pulling on the shoe, because it has to be braced against the side of the body.

So most people feel that immediate pain and they want to quit. They don't understand that first of all, that's not the real pain, because it's going to get a lot worse before it gets better. They say, "Oh man, that really hurt!" They probably don't consider what if they really could pull that horseshoe open. What if someone could snatch 250 reps in ten minutes? Yeah, your lungs and your heart are about to take a beating...you're probably going to be sore for a couple of days afterwards, but you also just accomplished something that only the tiniest percentage of human beings on the planet can do.

**Josh: So if you want to learn to do this stuff...some feats are obviously riskier than others. How do you go about finding someone to teach you to do it right? Assuming you aren't lucky enough to stumble across a nice guy on a forum.**

**Adam:** A lot of this information has become highly guarded. I have become a problem in that community because I don't feel a need to hide information. It's like a guy who squats 1000 pounds has no problem telling someone how he squats 1000 pounds. He's not worried about other people doing it. And that's how I feel about feats of strength.

If something requires a secret—there is a secret piece of information that would enable other people to do it—it's not a real feat of strength. It becomes a trick. So I have no problem telling someone how I bend a piece of stainless steel that's six inches long, because I know that it is a genuine thing. It's not like there's anything I can tell them that will magically allow a man off the street to bend that piece of steel. There is no trick.

If people want to learn legitimate feats of strength and they want good instruction, there are a couple of people who have made some information available.

Jedd Johnson from Diesel Crew has put out a couple of excellent pieces of information related to card tearing and nail bending. We're working on some more stuff for that.

Dennis Rogers has made a lot of information available over the last couple of years with his Old Time Strongman Training School.

**Josh: So when you say a lot of the information is guarded, do you mean it's guarded unless you pay for it?**

**Adam:** No. Because there are people who specifically would not share the information...period. For whatever reason, they just would not share it. Like finger lifting. I had a hell of a time getting anyone to tell me anything about it other than: "You lift the weight with your finger." Nobody wanted to explain the setup. Because there are certain things you might want to know, like how high should I be striving to lift the

weight? How long do you hold it? What is the optimum training frequency? What are the things you need to look out for?

Those are pieces of information that you would easily share for kettlebell training, but for some reason, when it becomes How To Be A Good Plate Curler, nobody wants to tell you. Some information is very transitive. A good training program for squats is very similar to a good program for nail bending, but the techniques differ.

There are people who are very insecure with themselves who do these kinds of things. There are people running around calling themselves strongmen, and they are so afraid of anybody coming up who does these things easily. So they control the info. I have guys who I know for a fact are very worried about what I do because I don't feel a need to hide how to bend a wrench. Either someone's going to work out how to eventually do it, like me, or they're not.

**Josh: And even if they knew how to do it, it's not like the majority of the people out there are going to want to do it. I don't see any danger of it not being cool or impressive anymore because everyone can do it.**

**Adam:** Exactly. And you just hit a key point. If a lot of people can do something, it doesn't diminish its value. Doing 20 pull-ups is an incredible thing to see. If someone can do 20 pull-ups that impresses me every time. There aren't a lot of secrets about how

to do 20 pull-ups, but most people just can't do it. But let's say a lot of people suddenly could do it: would that diminish its value? Absolutely not.

**Josh: You're obviously very, very, very dedicated. I've heard you say more than once that you don't eat much and you don't sleep much. You can't stay out of the gym. You also spend the time in the gym working brutally hard. The concept of overtraining is something that people argue about a lot. Is overtraining a real thing? If it is, how do you avoid it?**

**Adam:** Overtraining is a fact. I've heard people talk about: "There's no overtraining, there's just under-eating." That is nonsense. Your body has definable limits in terms of the progress it can make during any given time. Those limits are defined by a lot of factors, including being diet and sleep. You have to get sleep, there's no doubt about it. The amount of sleep you need is a lot less than what people think.

You have to balance out things like tendon workload. That's a big one right there. How bad am I beating down the tendons in my body? You have to balance out the adrenaline response, the mental amping...you cannot amp yourself up for everything you do. If you try to mentally engage yourself very hard in every single lift, every single set, you will quickly burn out.

You'd burn out much quicker than somebody who knew how to take it easy. The mental side of overtraining is actually what crushes people faster than the physical side. So how do you avoid that? The first thing is that you have to understand that not every day can

be 100% balls to the walls, hard as I can do it. People who train that way get hurt quite often.

High intensity training that guys like Mentzer [Mike] made popular in the 80s...did it produce some guys who did very well in bodybuilding? Absolutely. You can't dispute the results of the guys that it worked for during that time, let Mentzer. I don't want to get engaged as far as their drug use and all that. At the end of the day they still had to put in the work and they made tremendous progress.

The average guy, though, will probably end up hurting themselves going to far and not knowing when to stop. Not making the correct decisions. So what do I do? I alternate the difficulty and the objective, training day to training day. Some days it may look like I've done the exact same workout, back to back. Monday and Tuesday look like the exact same workout.

But if somebody looks down and they're counting up how many reps, total poundage, the amount of time spent doing it, you see very different numbers. That is truly the key to how to avoid overtraining. A quote that I heard that I really like. Jack Reape is a powerlifter and a Captain in the Navy, which is a very high rank. Jack says "Intensity is not a backwards baseball cap and a grimace. Intensity is a number."

That's what people don't understand. People tell me, "I work out really intensely." And I say, "Really? Do me a favor: tell me what kind of numbers we're dealing with here. At

what intensity are you bench pressing? At what intensity are you running?” And they say “Oh man, I’m doing it really hard.”

Are you sure? Because a set of 15 reps is not very intense. By the definition of what intensity it, it’s not very intense.

Perhaps you really sweated it out and it was really hard and you made a lot of noise, but that does not mean it was an intense set, by that definition. And making something harder than it needs to be does not necessarily make it more productive.

**Josh: What physical accomplishments are you most proud of?**

**Adam:** Physical things I have done that I really enjoy...bending the Red Nail and certifying on it was something that’s not that hard to do. But I was very happy when I did it. Because when I first saw it...when I opened up my first box of nails and I looked through it, I was like: “What is *this* and who are the people who can bend it?”

It was the thought process of, “Man, I can do this, I can really do this.” And then I did it. I got to the point where I can bend Red Nails in 2-3 seconds. Being able to do the Red Nail certification was a big deal. It’s not that hard, but at the time, for me, it represented getting over a huge mental hurdle.

When I bent 20 Red Nails in 15 minutes...that was a very difficult thing to do, very challenging, and I was very happy when I completed that. When I bent 100 grade five bolts in 50 minutes, that was extremely physically demanding. It required a lot of pain tolerance because by the time I hit 50 there was no skin left on my hands.

**Josh:** I watched those videos. That was pretty crazy.

**Adam:** That's still not the end of that. I have plans for harder bars and more numbers. I've also done 150 60d nails in an hour. It takes a different kind of thing to say *Do one more. Bend one more nail.* Besides those things...I've bent some really tough horseshoes...mainly just hitting points that a lot of people said I wouldn't be able to do.

Bottoms-up pressing the 48 kilo bell at a bodyweight of 212 was something that I really worked very hard on.

**Josh:** That took a year, didn't it?

**Adam:** From start to finish, I count it as a year. From start to finish the training block was August-February. What had happened was, I took the summer off from bottoms-up pressing, came back into it in August, and said "I will bottoms-up press the 88 as quick as I can." It was probably in October that I first started getting very consistent bottoms-up pressing the 40...I did a s\*\*\* load of training with the 40, I was taping plates to it, et cetera.

From there I moved up to the 44, then hit the 48 way ahead of my timeline. There was so much mental effort and preparation put into doing that...some people were under the impression that I did that very very quickly and it took very little effort for me, but that's not the case. It was a difficult thing to do and it took a lot of smart training to be able to program how it was going to work while still progressing in other things.

I didn't backslide in anything else while I worked on that 48 bottoms up.

**Josh: How about non-physical achievements?**

**Adam:** In my military career a lot of the different awards I've won have meant a lot to me because it was acknowledgement for things we had done. I've made every stripe as quick as you can make it within the promotion system that they have. I've held some jobs that were pretty exceptional. I've had moments where I look back and say "*Man, I'm doing stuff that other people have to watch movies and play videogames to understand.*"

My first professional show that I got paid for was...I don't look at that in terms of physical, I look at that in terms of business...but the ability to take some things that I love to do and convert it into income....for me, that was huge. The ability to go from *I like to bend metal and I think it's cool to You are going to pay me to bend metal in front of you*

*and you will like it as well.* That was a big thing for me, to turn this around and make money off it.

**Josh: Who do you look up to?**

**Adam:** The first person who made a big impact for me to start training was Arnold Schwarzenegger. As a little kid, probably a lot like you were, I was a little skinny guy, got tall faster than everyone else in the class...you start looking around and saying “*Well, who do I want to be?*” I grew up watching Arnold Schwarzenegger’s movies as a little kid. Here was this guy that everybody respected, he’s always in a position of power. He looked like a superhero. And so my original training started off very much in that way.

I was given two books in 1996 or 1997, *The Master of Hand Strength* and *Dinosaur Training*: John Brookfield’s book and Brooks Kubik’s book. Those were the turning point in how I eventually ended up here. Brookfield was something like I’d never seen before. He looked like my grandfather but he talked about doing things routinely that I’d never seen anyone do...well, at the time I was mopping the Gold’s Gym every night after school.

I didn’t really know gym etiquette so I’d go up to big guys and say “*Hey, can you do this?*” I had ordered a set of the Captains of Crush at the time and I’d walk around the

place all the time with the #2, trying to get these guys to squeeze it, because Brookfield said you're not going to find people closing a #2 off the street.

I started looking into *Dinosaur Training* and I would ask people, "*Do you think you could press a 200lb sandbag overhead?*" They said, "*Oh no, that's impossible,*" but they [Brookfield and Kubik] said it could be done. So those were two people who really had a huge impact on me.

In 1999 I was given a copy of a book called *Power Factor*. They followed up with a book called *Static Contraction Training*. That was John Little and Peter Cisco. Now, those books were different from anything I'd ever seen because they talked about things from a scientific angle—and they talked about real science. You can measure the intensity of a workout and here's how you can do it.

You can predict how quickly someone will adapt and this is how you can chart it. They talked about a lot of things that were very counter to the things I'd originally learned from the bodybuilding world. You didn't need to hit a muscle from every single angle to make it bigger. Now in retrospect...that program was missing the skill element. So you can make someone very muscular with that system, but they will not be able to demonstrate very good strength in a conventional sense. But that spurred a lot of thought processes in my mind.

2003 was the first time I'd run across any of Pavel's programs. I was given a copy of *Bulletproof Abs*, which at the time I paid very little attention to because I was still working out of the big-guy strongman mentality. I said "Well, who is this guy?" and I never really thought about how hard it would be to do something like a Dragon Flag.

In 2004 I got a copy of *Power To The People*. Read it, didn't do very much with it. It kind of sat in my bookshelf for a while. While I was deployed later on that year I started using the program and just made tremendous progress.

When I left Iraq the first time, I was at the biggest I'd been at any point in my life...but I was decidedly the strongest I'd ever been at that point, by leaps and bounds, very very strong.

So that was when I started getting involved in a lot of the kettlebell training systems and the hardstyle community and all these different things.

People who have had a big influence on me since then...Dennis Rogers has been a massive influence to me over the last couple of years. Dennis is really an incredible human being, both in what he does for people, what he does in his performances, what he does as a businessman, what he does with his ministry...he's highly involved in that. I believe he has a genuine concern for the well-being of the people who approach him.

He's a very kind individual. I have tremendous respect for Dennis. And he was one of the people who really told me that, "*You can do this. This is something you have an aptitude towards. You can make this work.*" Which was important for me at the time because so many people look at the feats of strength and the prospect of making money off it and they say there's no way.

At this point a lot of my peers have a big impact on me. [Brad Nelson](#) out of Woodsbury Minnesota is a very good friend to me. He's also a coach to me. Brad has a phenomenal ability to coach. He is exceptional in terms of his mobility and his training for it in terms of Z Health. He can grasp information very very quickly and break it down, which I really like.

There's a guy name Greg Matonick out of New Jersey. Older gentleman...good friend of mine. He's done a lot of coaching with me.



Photo courtesy of <http://www.gregmatonick.com>



There's Stanley Steel. Stanley is one of a kind...freak show strong. The world has no comprehension of how strong Stanley really is because he does things that no one else can do and that no one else is even close to. He is so far off the charts that a lot of people have kind of passed him by in their thought process because there's no measuring stick to accurately grade him. Stanley's become a really good friend to me. He's a good guy.



**"Stanley Steel"**

Slim The Hammer Man, 75 years old, still performing...extremely tough.

**Josh:** Another tall guy, right?

**Adam:** Yeah, Slim is 6'6" and at his age now, he still hits feats that cannot be replicated. I've got on the phone with him right after he's finished up a workout and he'll tell you "*Yeah, I did this tonight.*" And he'll throw numbers out that I won't be hitting for a couple more years. Just phenomenal. And he's the proof: a lifetime of hard work makes a person tough. Attention to details makes a person strong.



Photo courtesy of [oldtimestrongman.com](http://oldtimestrongman.com)

Me and Jedd [Johnson] are really good buddies. I like Jedd because Jedd is really good at a lot of different things and he likes to help people. Jedd will tell people his thoughts on how to train...on how to get them through different things. He's a really good dude. I think people would do better to listen more to the [Diesel Crew](#) guys because they are doing a lot of work to help people.

Jim Smith has put out some of the most comprehensive training programs in the last couple of years. If people would just take those programs and do what Jim says to do, they would be making incredible progress. Truly, that whole thing about being the strongest guy in your neighborhood—it's no joke.

Those are some of the key players right now. I think it's important for people to reach out work with people who are operating in different realms than they are...but who are becoming leaders in that field. I think it's bad business if someone locks themselves in to a small community and doesn't interact with people who are doing other things. I may have zero interest in doing what they do, but they come across similarities with the things I do. It helps us progress to different levels.

**Josh:** That's one of my favorite things about [Straight To The Bar](#). Scott Bird has gathered such a radically diverse group of people and strength talents. You can find something useful in almost anything you see there.

**Adam:** Scott is a great person. He's doing a lot of great work. Scott is one of those people that is bringing the strength community closer, one blog post at a time. Scott does not discriminate—if he sees something he thinks the rest of the world wants to see, it goes up on his page. Like Parkour. I had never in my life heard of that until I started seeing the videos pop up.

I personally have no interest in running around and jumping off of things, but it is very entertaining for me to watch these guys do what they love to do.

**Josh:** I read that you're trying to move back to Okinawa. Is that true?

**Adam:** That is no longer on the books. There was a time when I was wavering between staying in the service or getting out. If I'm going to stay in, where do I want to go? In terms of my military career, being positioned at a base like that allows me to do a lot of things I'm interested in. Without going into too many things that I can't really have posted on the Internet...I get to do a lot of different things. If I'm going to be stationed somewhere I like to be, moving, on the road, in the fight...Okinawa was where I needed to be if I wanted to stay in the fight.

With me getting out, though, I'm not very interested in living in Okinawa.

**Josh: So when are you actually done with the service?**

**Adam:** May 10, 2010 is my last day.

**Josh: And then what?**

**Adam:** I've got different things going on. I want to expand my gyms, set up a couple more in different locations. I'd like to move around and do different training opportunities. There are many ways to make money in this world. Making money is not a concern of mine. It is being able to move in the directions I want.

Book sales, e-books, people simply putting down the information they have in a way that is truly beneficial to be very profitable, if you give people good info.

If you're providing things that people can actually use, they will come to you and you can make a little bit of coin off of it.

**Josh:** When does your leverage book come out? I just saw that on your blog yesterday.

**Adam:** It will be going to Brad for editing very soon. From there we will look for a launch date. I want to have it out towards the end of summer. There have been some people who have put out some products that have really helped mold me in terms of *This is what product should look like*.

I've seen some ebooks on the market where...they didn't put a lot of time into it, they didn't put a lot of effort. They obviously did not field test what they're putting out, which at the end of the day, it makes it bulls\*\*\*. It's bulls\*\*\*if the product is based on hypotheticals. Jim Smith puts out...oh man, Smitty might work on a project for two years before it finally hits the market. And when it comes out, it is a highly polished product. It's been field-tested. We know what it does and it's usable, functional information.

The things I'm writing on in this book...I need to make sure it's being presented in a way where you can buy it, open it up, and there's immediate value to you. I don't want to produce a book that requires people to ask me ten different questions so I have to release

three different supplements to it before it makes sense. I want it to come out, you open it up, you read it one time and you're ready to go.

**Josh: As a reader, I know I'll appreciate that. That's all I've got for questions,**

**Adam. Is there anything you would like to add?**

**Adam:** Some key things that I would like people to do:

I would like people to work more to help each other out. For what it's worth, I would like people to quit being such big damn babies about things that are not important. I don't know if that's going to happen, but a lot of people...in terms of their fitness training...just need to press forward and get kind of stubborn for a while in order to make the best progress.

Quit asking for permission to see if you can do something. That is a ridiculous question. *Can I substitute exercise A for Exercise B?* Of course you can. Is it a good idea? Highly subjective. I think if people want more help in the training world, they need to be prepared to put in a lot more.

That might mean more money. It might mean more time. It probably means more effort. I do not turn people away when they ask questions, unless they're being a jackass. But if someone asks me a question, and then a couple of days later I see another question from

them, and over the course of a week they ask me 50 random shots in the dark...and it becomes apparent they're just asking questions to get attention...

...I would rather they send me an email and tell me how their weekend is, or how their family is doing, or what they're going to do on Saturday, because obviously they just want to have a conversation...and not to waste my time talking training when they're not serious.