

NEWS AND FEATURES



Pro Speak

7/6/2005

Meet Chuck Sanow

Ask an average person the first thing that comes to mind when they hear "Chicago" and chances are you'll get an answer like "the Windy City," "the Sears Tower," or bad winters and never ending construction traffic. Ask a bodybuilder and there's a good chance the answer will be "Chuck Sanow."

Chuck Sanow is not your average bodybuilder. Chuck came up through the competitive bodybuilding scene during an era when bodybuilders were considered muscle-bound meatheads, and weightlifting gyms were decorated with peeling paint, duct tape, and chalk dust. A time when great physiques were built by blood, sweat, and tears, and the words discipline and hard work were commonplace.

Over twenty years after first setting foot on a contest stage, Chuck Sanow still exudes those old-school characteristics, not only in his training and physique but his life as well. Optimum Nutrition recently had the chance to catch up with this Chicago living legend to



conduct a rare and in-depth interview. So without any further ado, let's take a look into the life and opinions of one of the most prolific and successful bodybuilders to step foot on an NPC stage as he prepares for the upcoming 2005 NPC Masters Nationals.

ON: Chuck, can you give us some background on yourself - where you grew up, what you were like as a kid, sports you were involved in?

Chuck: I grew up in Oak Lawn, IL. Went to Oak Lawn High School, wrestled in high school, did well in wrestling, got out of high school, I needed an individual sport, got into bodybuilding. I've been fairly successful in that, I own two gyms, I've been the chairman of the NPC for Illinois for probably the last 10 years, and hopefully this year I'll be an IFBB Pro.

ON: Did you have anyone who inspired you in your early days?

Chuck: Nah, I just wanted to be one of the guys in the books. I didn't care who it was or anything like that. I just wanted to be one of the guys in the books.

ON: Are you currently a full-time bodybuilder or do you have some other type of career?

Chuck: Yeah, I'm a Chicago Fireman. I've been doing that for about four years.

ON: Describe for us if you would a typical day in the life of Chuck Sanow.

Chuck: (Laughs) . . . way too busy. I get up in the morning about 6:30, take my Pro Complex™ shake and some of my vitamins and off to the gym I go to train at 8:00. I start training people at 9:00 and go to 1:00 or 2:00; I get a break, come back around 4:00, start training clients until about 7:00 or 8:00, home, eat, to bed, back up at 3:00 AM for my nighttime Pro Complex™ PM, and start it all over again.

ON: So being a fireman and bodybuilder must jive pretty well together, schedule-wise?

Chuck: You know what; it works real well, a lot better than I thought. That whole day at the firehouse I completely take off, I don't train at the firehouse, I just work.

ON: Chuck, looking over your competition history, you are obviously one of the most active and successful competitors that the sport has ever seen. What drives you to bodybuild and compete?

Chuck: Pro. To be a pro athlete. I've beat some of the guys that are pros. I feel I'm good enough to be a pro. And that's what keeps me going. I might quit the day after I get that pro card, but I'll get it before I stop.

ON: What has been your best moment in bodybuilding so far? Anything that really stands out?

Chuck: No, nothing yet. Masters Nationals in five weeks

ON: What are your current competition plans?

Chuck: The Masters Nationals. I've been a bridesmaid so many times I want to be a bride. You know what I mean? I wanna win. I'm tired of being second. I'm tired of losing in the overall. I want that card.

ON: Tell us about your training? Do you have a particular philosophy?

Chuck: I listen to my body. I'm an 8 to 12 rep guy. I try to train hard, intense all year round. But now at this stage of the game I kinda listen to my body. If it says eight reps is enough, I rack it.

ON: Describe your typical training. What are your some of your favorite exercises? What do you consider to be your strongest muscle-groups?

Chuck: I like training legs. I think legs are my weak point if I had to pick a weak point, so I look forward to trying to make 'em better.



do in terms of daily protein intake?

Chuck: I try to go a 1 1/2 to 2 grams per body pound. If you're 200 lbs, 220 lbs you need to

ON: Does your off-season training differ considerably from your contest-prep training?

Chuck: No, none, zero. I might pick up doing abs and calves a little more often, but as far as the body parts it all stay the same. I try to go heavy and go with how I feel.

ON: Describe your typical diet. Do you eat clean year round or will you need to make some significant changes as you dial things in for the Nationals?

Chuck: You know what I'm one of the fortunate ones where I can eat pretty much eat whatever I want and not really get too far out of shape. And I know people aren't going to believe this but if they don't believe me they can call Chad (Nichols), but I probably won't start dieting for the Masters Nationals until 4 weeks out.

ON: What is your position on protein intake (grams)? Do you feel that in order to get to the elite level of bodybuilding you need to significantly up your protein? What do you

take in 400 - 440 grams and I think the trouble that a lot people have is the consistency of that. It's very hard to do that seven days a week, four weeks a month, twelve months a year. It's easy to do it for a little while and then all of a sudden you're like I've gotta take a break from eating. And then that's where it kinda slides down a little bit and then you've gotta work your way back up.

ON: So it sounds like one of the keys to success in your view is consistency.

Chuck: Exactly. Especially if you want to be competing with the top people.

ON: What supplements do you take and what works in your opinion?

Chuck: Glutamine. I go through a ton of Optimum Glutamine. I go through a ton of Pro Complex™, Pro Complex™ PM, Amino Acids, stuff like that. I'm old school. Straight old school.

ON: It sounds like you're preaching the basics whether its training, diet, supplements.

Chuck: It's like squatting, benching, and deadlifting.

ON: You've been actively competing for over twenty years now. Looking back over the years, how do you think the sport of bodybuilding, and particularly competitive bodybuilding, has changed - both good and bad?

Chuck: I guess if it's changed it's gone through its periods where big is in, and then it's gone through where conditioning is in. Now I think it's in a period where it's a combination of both, but also they're trying to go more towards the conditioning end I think. You know, they still want you big, but they don't want you to lose your V-taper. The guys with the big bellies, that's gonna be out. I think everything they've done has been positive; I really don't see any negative, except for the way that women's bodybuilding is being treated - like a stepchild. Women's bodybuilding is women's bodybuilding; let them be. Or give it to someone that wants to restore it, it's being passed around like a hot potato. Just give it to somebody that wants to promote women's bodybuilding for what it is.

ON: Do you think bodybuilding will ever be accepted by mainstream society as a legitimate sport?

Chuck: Never. Never. Especially not with the baseball scandal and stuff like that. Never. It's always a subculture kind of thing.

ON: In your opinion, what are the main benefits of adhering to the bodybuilding lifestyle?

Chuck: With me being on the fire department, I ride in an ambulance a couple of times a month and I pick-up people that are younger than me, and they're train wrecks. I tell my clients your body is like a credit card; you can only charge on it for so long. If you don't start paying off that balance, that credit card's going to cancel. That's your body. If you don't start taking care of your body, it's going to cancel itself out. Getting proper rest and nutrition,

hopefully we'll all live to be 100 and prove everybody wrong.

ON: That's a powerful statement - something that mainstream America could really benefit from hearing.

Chuck: Yeah, if they wanted to listen.

ON: Here we've got a sport that isn't accepted by mainstream America, yet everything it preaches and espouses could benefit mainstream America.

Chuck: Twenty years ago weightlifting was for idiots and meatheads and stupid people and now, every high school is putting in a multi-million-dollar facility for their athletes. You've got doctors coming out saying that it helps women prevent cancer and osteoporosis . . . all of a sudden now, weightlifting is the craze, but nobody wants to give credit to the people that were doing it back in the 70's and the 80's; now it's just something everybody thought-up on their own. We've been doing it for twenty years.



ON: So maybe there really is hope for bodybuilding?

Chuck: Yeaahhh, I think that people, mainstream people, they think that bodybuilders look like they do onstage everyday. If they would take the time to understand that we diet for 8, 12, 16, some of us for 4 weeks to get to that point, and then after the show we go back to being normal. They wouldn't even give us a second look other than "he looks like a football player" or "he looks like he's in the gym."

ON: Has being a competitive bodybuilder opened any other doors for you?

Chuck: I kind of keep to myself; we wouldn't be doing this if you didn't ask me. I'm kind of shy, and people get the wrong impression of me. They think you know, he's stuck-up and this and that. But I just don't approach people. If they come and ask me a question, I'm more than happy to give the answer, but I'm just not an outgoing "hey my name's Chuck, glad to meet ya" kind of guy. That's not me, never has been.

ON: So would it be fair to say that the reason that you're a bodybuilder, your love of

bodybuilding all comes back to self-satisfaction?

Chuck: Absolutely. And dedication and determination that I've got from wrestling, and it's carried on into bodybuilding. I waited 6 years to get on the fire department. Whatever you do, in bodybuilding you want to be the best, you want to win. So whatever you do outside of that you have that tendency to want to be the best.

ON: So being kind of a quiet, self-motivated guy, how does it feel to walk down the street or into the supermarket and have people perceive you as a giant?

Chuck: You know I pretty much keep covered up. You know what I do notice a lot? I notice the kids, though, and that's cool, 'cause they're looking at you, and they're thinking wow, but you know, some adults, they see you and look the other way, maybe whisper something and you know it's bad.

ON: So do the kids ever come up to you and ask you if you're superman or the hulk and ask for an autograph?

Chuck: Yeah, especially in the fire department, summertime, if it's t-shirt weather. You get a lot of kids coming up.

ON: It's got to feel pretty good to know that you are an inspiration to these young kids.

Chuck: Oh absolutely, kids are what it's all about. Most adults already have their preconceived notions and you're not going to change their minds.



ON: Do you have any tips for up-and-coming bodybuilders or young athletes just getting into the sport? What direction would you steer them or what advice would you give them to help them get started?

Chuck: Pick a goal and stick to it. And eventually, with enough determination and enough effort, you'll reach it.

ON: Where do you see Chuck Sanow in ten years time? Have you thought that far ahead?

Chuck: I'm just thinking 5 weeks ahead with a pro card.

ON: Is there anything you would like to add or anyone you would like to thank?

Chuck: Everybody that I know has been really supportive. Everybody. From people at my

gym, to my nutritionist, to Kim and Chad, to Optimum Nutrition for helping me. Like I said, I'm not a real approachable guy for some reason, but it seems like the people that know me like me because I treat people the way I want to be treated: with respect.

ON: How can people contact Chuck Sanow?

Chuck: Call USA Gym. 708-598-3846. I'm not on a computer.

Those of you with a computer can learn more about Chuck at www.npcillinoisbodybuilding.com

And if you find yourself in the Chicago area, make sure to visit USA Gym at 7621 100th Place Building B, Bridgeview, IL 60455.

©2005 optimumnutrition.com, All rights reserved.

Note: Although we strive to make our site as accurate as possible, we are human and unfortunately mistakes do occur. Consequently, we will not be liable for typographical, pricing, or other inaccuracies that may occur. Prices and availability are subject to change without notice. We reserve the right to refuse any order. If you have any questions about this policy or suspect that you have discovered an error, please email or contact our Consumer Affairs Department at (630) 236-0097.