

Brett Gibbs

**Powerlifting Meet Preparation,
Making Weight & Insights into
a World Champion Mindset**



Episode 122



Danny Lennon:

Hello and welcome to Sigma Nutrition Radio, the podcast that brings you evidence-based discussions with the world's leading researchers and coaches in fields related to nutrition, health and performance. I am your host, Danny Lennon, and you are listening to Episode 122, and today I have IPF World Champion Brett Gibbs on the show to discuss his powerlifting journey, his coaching philosophy, and a number of insightful things on mindset. For those of you not familiar with Brett, he's an absolute beast. When you talk about being elite-level in sport, then you just don't get much bigger and higher than Brett. He is the 2015 IPF World Champion, 83 kilos, which is like raw unequipped lifting, and at the time of this podcast, he's only weeks away from defending that world title in Texas. He's also the IPF Junior Champion, 2004. He smashed all sorts of world records. He has insane training totals for body weight as well, which we'll talk about. And I think most impressively to me, he has one of the most bulletproof mindsets that just oozes greatness that I think I've ever come across and had the pleasure of talking to someone and getting that vibe of just how strong-willed and how obsessed with that particular goal. It's fascinating to me to see that and we'll certainly dig into some of that during the episode.

So while this episode will be of particular interest to those of you interested in powerlifting, there are just so many golden messages that I think everyone can take when you get to hear the thoughts of someone who literally became the best in the world in their given field. The lessons are always going to be transferrable to everyone and to every sphere of

life. So, as you listen, try to think what the underlying principles and lessons are because those bigger, kind of broader concepts are the things that then we can apply everywhere even if we have absolutely no interest in powerlifting. For those of you who are specifically into the powerlifting content, then after this episode you might also want to check out previous episodes that we've had with the likes of Greg Nuckols, Eric Helms and Ryan Doris, for example.

The show notes to this episode are going to be over at SigmaNutrition.com/episode122. Also, if you have not already done so, you can sign up to receive the transcripts to each podcast episode including this one, which will be delivered direct to your inbox as a PDF file completely for free. So let's get into this week's show with Brett Gibbs.

Brett Gibbs, welcome to the show, man. How you doing?

Brett Gibbs: Thank you so much, man. It's awesome to be here. I'm feeling really, really good, just chilling out here in Canada. It's a pretty nice day outside, so we don't see a lot of that at the moment, so it's good to see.

Danny Lennon: Awesome, I'm glad to hear it. And we're just about over a month or so out from Texas, so how have all the preparations been going for that and how are you feeling at the moment?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, so right now we're 55 days out from actually lifting, so it's very calculated right now. I'm into about week five of my prep; we've got about a 10-week prep that we were doing. I'm working with a coach, John Paul Cauchi, and things are going really, really good. I had to back up, I had a pretty tough competition recently at the Arnold Pro, which was in Ohio. So that was in March, and then getting back into the swing of things after a big competition, having a few days off, and it's been really good though. Last week was the best regular training I've had in a long, long time and I'm like just feeling super-motivated to just absolutely get in and give it 100% again.

Danny Lennon: Awesome. And at the Arnold's, what you totaled, like 800 was it, I think?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, so I totaled 801 kilos. So what had happened, my previous world record for the total—so I lift in the 83-kilo class or the 183-pound class—for my previous best total I went nine from nine [lifts] the year before to total 800.5 kilo, and this meet here I only got one squat in...so my opening squat was 275 kilo, 605 pounds, and I missed it the first two times on

depth. So I squatted away fine, I came back up, but the judges didn't agree that that was to the required depth, so I came back out on my third attempt and I sank it a little bit deeper and I got three white lights. So it was a tough start, but to come back and still get a very small PB [personal best], I think it was five out of nine lifts that I completed correctly, to still get an 801 kg total was a pretty good thing for me considering the circumstances.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, for sure. And so then in your own mind, how are you expecting your performance at the world's to compare to that or do you have any specific aims in mind right now or does that depend on how the next kind of block of training goes?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. So just to throw it back a little bit, just to where I've been the last year or so, so this time last year coming into the world championships, they're in Finland, same time of year around June, beginning at June, I was struggling a little bit with my programming. Like I'd always been doing my own programming but it was just like I had no accountability anymore. I had no one to report back to. It was all really on myself. I wasn't at 100% like body-wise. I was like struggling with a little bit of like injury, just those niggles. Mainly through my legs, through my quads was I was struggling with the most, and what happened after that is I didn't have the best meet; however, I was still lucky enough to actually win the world champs last year.

But leaving that, I got on board with a coach, John Paul Cauchi, who's a really good friend of mine. We had a really, really smooth training program, which led me to that 800-kilo total in the next meet, and then basically what I did is I didn't really work with him for the final few months in 2015. I just trained. I was on the road. I was doing a lot of seminars. I'd left my job. I started a business. And I came into the gym one day I peaked just for like a gym meet; we all like to go and lift heavy in the gym. Well, I decided to finish the year off with a couple of weeks to go and before Christmas, then I would take some time off, and I went into the gym and I had a 300-kilo squat, a 207.5-kilo bench press, and a 320-kilo deadlift.

So that really set the standard for what I was to expect from myself going into 2016, not quite getting those goals at the Arnold Championship primarily because of the squat. My goal was really high coming into the world championships. I want to make it a really clean effort. I don't want to mess any lifts. I want the program to do its job. I want to go and lift efficiently on the day and come away with some of those numbers that I

did have in the gym. My best squat in competition is 285 kilo, but in the gym I've squatted 300 kilo. So that's really the goal for the world championships, is to go and squat around that 300-kilo mark. I want to get the bench press up around that 215-kilo mark and just to improve my deadlift again. I had a good performance at the Arnold with my deadlift. I successfully got 320 kilo, just missing 330. So I'd like to go and put that 330 on the platform and just put together a really well-rounded meet.

Danny Lennon: And there are a couple of things that I'll probably come back to later in the show, particularly when you mention around coaching and the importance you found of taking someone externally to look over your programming.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: But first, maybe just to kind of start this whole conversation and give people a background who maybe are not as familiar with you, could you maybe bring us through your background as both a competitive lifter in terms of maybe some of your best numbers, the kind of journey you went through in kind of powerlifting, and then also maybe mention some of the stuff you're doing now with the coaching side of your business?

Brett Gibbs: Definitely. So lifting all started for me a very different way. I didn't walk into the gym because I wanted to go to the gym. What happened, I was at the skate park one day with a friend and I went by just kind of one of the ramps and I fell backwards, and I went to push myself up off the ground and before I knew it I realized I broke my humerus, my right humerus, the bicep/tricep bone, and absolutely shattered it.

Danny Lennon: Wow.

Brett Gibbs: And like I was in a lot of pain and I was just over the summer here in New Zealand, so it was a pretty depressing time to be in a cast for over six weeks. I finally got that out of cast and I went back to school, like it was athletics time and we're throwing the javelin, we're doing sprinting, all this sort of stuff. And because of the position the cast was in, I was always in like a flex position, right? So my hand would always be across my stomach when I was in the cast, so what happened is my elbow, I wasn't able to extend my elbow 100% and I was...we were doing a test and it was just the javelin throw, and the PE teacher at the time, she said, "Oh, Brett, you just need to get a score. Doesn't matter how far you throw it. It's got nothing to do with that. We just want to get you on the board, basically," and I remember just picking out the javelin. And I was always very competitive at school no matter what we were doing. If it was a

friendly game of touch rugby or just a friendly game of soccer, whatever it may be, like I had to win. That was just what I was like. And I just remember picking up the javelin and just running up and just throwing it as hard as I could, thinking I could get some really big throw in. And I remember just as soon as I let the javelin go, with the force I guess I was creating through that range of motion my elbow naturally just wanted to extend to throw the javelin, and it just snapped the bone again. And so that was like the second time it's happened within like six, seven weeks.

Danny Lennon: Wow.

Brett Gibbs: And basically what had happened from there was that was where the journey began. My parents, my mother in particular, took me down to the physio and she referred me to the gym, "Oh, Brett, you need to go in work on your extension. You need to put some muscle back in the arm. You've barely been using it for the last couple of months." So my parents got me a gym membership. I started training, just like in a commercial gym, just like there was a small gym upstairs, that type of thing. I didn't really have a trainer or anything like that. I sort of just went in and...you know when you're young, when you're 15, you just want to train the muscles that look good that you can see?

Danny Lennon: Right.

Brett Gibbs: So I started training shoulders, arms, chest, and I'd never even considered like training legs or anything like that. And it was about a year of doing that, literally a year of just doing the same thing, training four or five days a week, but I found the passion though. I really loved doing it. I had a good bench press. People started to see that I had a strength there. And one day I was at work, I was working at the supermarket at the time and I was still in school, and one of the guys said, "Oh, Brett, come to the private gym. We've got a private gym in Masterton and one of the guys who owns it, he's a bodybuilder and he's like he's really into that stuff and I'm sure he'd love to give you some advice." So I went down to the gym, I loved the gym, I joined up. And the owner was a really, really cool dude, and lucky, he saw that I had a good strong bench press and dumbbell press and this naturally strong upper body. And you know when you walk into a gym, you always know who the strongest person in the gym is. They always talk about him.

Danny Lennon: Right.

Brett Gibbs: They're always intimidated. If he's in the gym, they're all...everyone sort of stands around and looks over. They don't want to make eye contact with him. And I knew who that guy was. His name was Spike. And my friend came out to me and he goes, "Oh, Spike can bench press 220 kilo," and I just thought, "That is crazy." Like 100 kilo or 120 kilo at that time was like a massive bench press for me. Like if I even saw someone else doing that, I'll be super-impressed. And he said to me, "Well, I talked to Spike and I want you to go train with him on Wednesday. They do bench press at 6:30."

And that's how it really started. Like I went into that session and they eventually talked me into doing squatting with him on Monday, deadlifting with him on Friday. They taught me all the basics, but it wasn't just that. It was that they almost brought me under their wing and like he was now my mentor. I felt like I had to give back to someone because he had shown me the way, and eventually that just turned into like a huge passion of like just wanting to get stronger and stronger and stronger. And before I knew it, they were getting slack with their training and I'm wondering why they're not showing up, and I was just like I just took off from there.

Danny Lennon: Right, and what were you, would you say 15, 16 around that time?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, I was around 15 when I first started getting to the gym.

Danny Lennon: Hearing a couple of those stories, you mentioned for example that you always had that real competitiveness in school and then with breaking your arm like twice in six or seven weeks, obviously there's a ton of adversity to come back from those two examples. Do you think that those kind of experiences translated into things that maybe down the road made you a better lifter from those kind of things of having to overcome breaking your arm twice and has that played out in any way in your kind of lifting career?

Brett Gibbs: It's always a tough one. I mean, like that sort of stuff I believe had to happen for me to find what I really was passionate about. And like looking at it now, like this is 10 years later, like I've been in the gym for 10 years now and like there's so much more information out there and there's how to do things correctly from day one. But at that time I broke my arm twice, I didn't know any better. I didn't know that like...well, I didn't know that there was like necessarily it could be a really bad thing and like mess me up for life or if it was just a broken arm. All I thought then was it's going

to heal and I'm just going to go to the gym and try to build some muscle. Like I just had this mindset like where nothing was holding me back and that's just how I approached those, like I can move my arm now and it's just go on and get on with the job and keep doing what I've found my passion doing, which is lifting weights in the gym.

Danny Lennon: And so what was the transition then from just going back to the gym to lift weights to get bigger to kind of help this recovery and what was the point that you kind of zeroed in on powerlifting specifically in terms of maybe going and competing or knowing that this was the route that you wanted to go?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. Yeah. So, well, you know, we always hear these stories or myself in particular, I get asked, "Brett, when should I do a powerlifting competition? This is my squat," or, "this is my bench press," or, "I want to get to X squat number before I go into a competition." I'm always completely the opposite, like, so I met this guy Spike and he had a training partner, Tony, and it was the three of us. We went and we trained at 6:30 Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I would always go in on Tuesday and Thursday because I love to be in the gym, and they basically see it, "Look there's a competition coming up." It was June 2008. I remember it just like anything. They drove out, they say, "Brett, come down to the competition and just lift. Just squat, bench, deadlift just like we've been doing these last few months. Why don't you come and give it a go?" And I never once thought to myself, I was never like, "Oh, well, can you give me like another six months? I need to get my squat up like to 200 kilo," or anything like that. I was like, "Look, man, if you're going to go and compete, I'd love to come and compete with you. Like that'll be amazing just to share that experience with you guys and meet other people and just really like I guess put the energy that I put into the gym, put it into something that I'm actually...well, that means something," and for me that was being competitive, rather than putting these numbers on a door in the gym it was actually putting them on stage, which was the powerlifting stage.

And I remember they just drove around and picked me up in the morning and I remember there was a weight class. I didn't particularly want to make it or I didn't need to cut for it or do anything like that. I wasn't really thinking like that, but I didn't know anything. I was probably around 78 kilos at the time and the weight class was 82 kilo. And we were driving down and we pulled over and he's like, "Oh, Brett, do you want to a pie before we get there? We're still like another hour and a half away." And I

was thinking “oh, well, I am 78 kg, if I eat that pie I might not make weight.”

Danny Lennon: [Chuckles]

Brett Gibbs: I was like, “No, I better wait till I weigh in before I eat that pie or before I have that drink.” And that was the turning point for me, was when I did that competition I walked away, I had a really like a fun day, like it was just like a real bonding experience for like to get out of town, like see these guys out of the gym and go and meet these other people who go to the gym three, four, five days a week and are really into the three main lifts and just getting stronger. And I sort of found this family in lifting and I had so much support. I went out and I was 16 at the time or 17—I think I was 16—and I pulled a 220-kilo deadlift at 77 kilo. And one of the guys who's one of the best refs in New Zealand, he's an ex-New-Zealand champ, he's a very strong lifter, he sat down and he said, “Brett, if you keep at this, one day you could be the New Zealand champion.” And I was like really inspired by that and I was like, “You know what? I think I can be. And I was like, “I think I've got so much more to offer to the sport than maybe anyone else knows.” It was just like a big punch in the gut of drive, like I was just like, “I want to go out and like prove to these people that believe me that I can go and do it.”

Danny Lennon: Right. Yeah, and I think hearing that at that point was probably something, like you mentioned, that was going to be a huge driver going forward at least or to build momentum of enjoying this meet, performing really well, then hearing this off someone you respect.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: So that was what, like eight years ago?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. That was like, yeah, eight years ago.

Danny Lennon: In the kind of that intervening eight years, obviously like the powerlifting landscape has changed massively, all of the world I think in that period of time. What are the biggest changes that you've observed within powerlifting in that kind of time span since you've been involved?

Brett Gibbs: Well, the biggest change is like definitely the equipped lifting versus raw lifting. So for those who don't know what equipped lifting is, that's using like a supportive suit, which from day one was supposedly, the supportive suit was like us wearing like compression shorts or something. It's

supposed to just help us a little bit, give us a better compression and like try to protect certain joint areas that are moving in the squat like the hips or the shoulder region to offer a little bit of support, but then it turned into something a whole lot more. It was like we could now add 50 or 100 kilos to our bench press because it was acting like a spring. We're trying to bring it to our chest and it doesn't want the bar to get to the chest, so it's allowing us to lift more weight.

Now, when we look at that from someone who has no idea what powerlifting is and they see this freak in the gym squatting over 400 kilo and he's got these knee wraps on, he's got this big suit on, and bench pressing similar weights as well, it's not really appealing to the public because they see it and they almost get scared. If they walked into the gym with just the clothes they have on and one of them start squatting and they went after it for a while, they could never like I guess visualize or like fathom that they would be able to lift that sort of weight. That's because they had no idea that these guys were like adding stuff to their knees. They're wrapping their knees up tight so they can flex around their knees or anything like that.

So what happened is there was a raw federation that started, still one of the same like umbrella, I guess, but just another way or another style of lifting, but it was much more realistic and the public could see it from a different point of view now, like now these numbers are a lot lower and people can actually just go in the gym that they don't look out of place. You're just squatting in the squat wrap because you're now lifting rawer and it just made things a lot easier to get into. We don't have to spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars on these suits to be competitive. We can now just all lift on the same playing field. And that's what's really changed. Like the numbers these days in lifting just like tripled and quadrupled and like membership numbers year to year at this stage, that's been the biggest change.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, it's pretty amazing to see when, even if you just look back at, like you say, year on year, you start looking at numbers and how many people are becoming active in the sport, it's pretty amazing to see.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: When it comes to your own approach specifically towards training and programming and coaching the athletes that you work with, is there any particular way to describe maybe an overall philosophy you have towards

programming and training that you try and instill throughout everyone that you're working with?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, the biggest things I look for, like the best thing I want to do, is I want to them to move well. I don't like seeing anyone move really, really slow. I like to see just good repetitive movement patterns and just trying to build as much volume through each lifter as we can. And then like when we look at like the training principles of like frequency and what sort of accessory movements we want them to be doing, then I've got to really get a good understanding of the full history, the full background, to see what's going to be applicable because the way I trained from, let's say in my first year of powerlifting to right now, that's eight years' difference. That's going to be completely different. So there's never like one rule, yeah, just the main things. It's just like just moving well in good positions because the better position we're lifting in, we just think about least injury, longevity in the sport, and those are the key, key things, and just progressively overloading the lifter so we always see a change in there, in the training numbers.

Danny Lennon: For sure, and maybe if we turn to a couple of specific things that I did want to ask you about...

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: One was that deciding on the best weight category for someone long-term and taking that long-term view of how should someone start evaluating potentially or what factors would determine what is the best weight class for them going forward?

Brett Gibbs: So like it's so hard to say because like, are you doing it for reasons to be super-competitive, are you doing it for reasons like... You've got to ask yourself, is powerlifting for me? Is it a hobby? Is it something that I take very seriously? So these are all things you want to look at, but obviously one of the first things you're going to look at is like your leverages like your height, like how tall are you? Obviously, the taller you are the probably more weight you're going to need to have for more stability and overall just lifting more weight. And it comes down to like your nutrition as well, like, are you having to starve yourself to be in this weight class or to drop weight? Really, long-term, that's going to affect your overall training throughout each year and each year. So you've just got to see where you're at, just like if you can just stick to like your caloric

maintenance, what's your body weight going to be there? Let's look at that to start with.

And let's say you're three to four kilo below one weight class or just slightly above one weight class, because the general difference is there's about seven to 10 kilos between each weight class, so it's just really assessing what you'd want to do from there. You're like, "Right, so if I was to drop these three kilos, how are we going to go about it that and how is that going to affect me?" But I'm never a really big advocate of dropping a whole lot of weight. I always like to see people at least at their maintenance or trying to put on a bit more weight so we can see better recovery and so they can train hard and ultimately be a lot stronger, because essentially that's why most people get into the gym and they find out about the weight classes later on and I find that sometimes if they're trying to remove too much weight to make these competitions, then that can actually drive passion away from the reason you actually started.

Danny Lennon:

For sure. And do you find that tends to be more of an issue with maybe beginner or intermediate lifters who are trying to keep themselves down in a certain weight class when potentially they could spend longer times in more of a caloric surplus for training over the next number of blocks to get just focus on being a better lifter and then maybe start worrying about weight classes?

Brett Gibbs:

Yeah. That's right. I think they should get to a real like...see, like what are their goals? Like competitively, like me, I'm like I want to be the world number one. Someone's goal might be, "I want to be the best in my country," or the best in their region. They are so deep now where you can be the best in a region in the country and you can still be a great lifter. So you need to assess your goals to start with, I think. That's the first thing.

And you've got to think long-term. Like when I started lifting, there was the 75-kilo class and the 82-1/2-kilo class, and from 2008 all the way through to the end of 2010 I always weighed in around 77 to 78 kilo. Nothing changed in my diet. I just trained, I ate the food that I felt like eating, and I didn't worry about cutting the weight until I was ready to go to my first world championships, which was in 2011, which is when I decided to cut down to the 74-kilo class just to be more competitive. It was a big difference in the numbers that they were reducing compared to the weight class up, so I felt like that to achieve my goals easier or place higher that I was probably going to be more beneficial for me to cut their body weight down. And that was pretty much the only time I ever did that.

Like I cut down for that year of 2011, and then I realized that that was the hardest cut like ever. Like I didn't know a lot about nutrition then at all, I didn't know how to do a good weight cut, but I felt terrible after and we had a really poor experience when I cut down to that weight class and I wasn't happy with myself. So I decided that next year I'm just going to go up a weight class and here we are now to 2016, I'm still in that same weight class and I've added hundreds of kilos to my total. So yeah, I think that some people like in that situation I'm in would have thought, "Well, I can go back and do that cut better," and they would have stayed in their weight class.

And something I want to bring up just quickly is like there was a lifter who I lifted with in 2011 in that same weight class who was around the same body weight as myself who cut the weight; he just made weigh-in. He was a lot stronger than me. And looking at him now, like he still lifts right now and he still takes it seriously. He's still in the same weight class but his Wilks formula, so like his power-to-body-weight ratio, is far less than mine and I think even in some of the lifts that he's doing right now are less than what he was doing in 2011. His squat may have gone up a little bit but I think his bench and deadlift have even gone down. So it just goes to show like a couple of different scenarios, a couple of ways that I could have gone, and I feel like just being more natural, eating more food, that's always going to be better in a strength sport that we're looking at, that we're talking about.

Danny Lennon: And so what do you typically spend most of the year walking around and what is your kind of training weight most of the time, and then how does that change leading up to a big meet, say, coming out towards June?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, so I've had a couple of approaches like, so take it back to the start of last year, so for six months I worked with a nutritionist, Joey Zinghini of NPS Labs. He was very good. It really just was a macro approach to the diet. So I had my set macros in order to make sure I was within those macros each and every day, and actually that would average out for the week. And that was for really to bring my weight down from 85, 86 kilo to pretty much training at 83 kilos for those six months and for that buildup for the competition, and what I found is that it wasn't as beneficial. So I did that. I trained at a lower body weight. I wasn't eating as much food as I wanted. My energy levels were slightly down. But if you looked at me, like if I looked at myself in the mirror, I was looking like very good. I was happy with the way I looked. I was a lot leaner.

But when I started working with my coach, JP, we did the opposite. He's like, "Well, I want you to be bigger. Bigger is stronger." And we all know that. We look at the weight classes, every single world record gets bigger and bigger with each weight class, doesn't it? So it makes sense that bigger is stronger. So what we did is I worked my way up to 88 kilo, so that's five kilos above the weight class, and we pretty much cut that down to about four kilos above the weight class with about 48 hours before weigh-in. So that was when I went in and I had a really, really good meet.

So what I do now is basically what I'm saying is that I like to be heavier and I just cut that little bit of weight, three to four kilo, because I can hold more muscle mass and I can recover better from eating more throughout the whole training cycle, and mentally it feels a lot better too. So that's what I do now and the reason I do that is because I'm in a really competitive level in my weight class. If I was just going to go to like a local meet, I wouldn't bother cutting that weight at all.

Danny Lennon: Right, yeah. So if someone's just trying to get some experience and build up, they're better off just going in at whatever weight they're normally going around at, going into whatever. But then it makes sense from what you're saying there for someone as competitive as yourself to spend as much time as possible with essentially as many calories that are going to provide the best training stimulus for a longer period, and then doing a very acute weight cut.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, that's really interesting.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. But you've got to be prepared for it mentally.

Danny Lennon: Right.

Brett Gibbs: You've got to know that it works—I wouldn't do my first weight cut at a five-kilo cut in a few days or even five days.

Danny Lennon: Sure.

Brett Gibbs: That might be a two- or a two-and-a-half-kilo weight cut and then, right, that was pretty easy, let's up it next time. And then you find out, what are the limits? When am I going to get one wrong where I'm like, "Right, that was too much? It's either time to start eating less or it's time to go up a weight class." So that's when you got to start reassessing.

Danny Lennon: And so the other thing leading up to preparing for a meet that I wanted to talk about was attempt selection because this tends to be a tricky issue for a lot of people.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: How do you plan out your attempts in advance whether that's for yourself or for your coaching clients or what advice could we give to lifters to help them make a better choice when it comes to attempts? What should they be thinking about?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, so the biggest thing, and I don't know if you notice this with lifting, is being consistent. So you've got to look over like the last eight to 10 weeks of their lifting. It depends how you've approached their program, but how consistent have they been with like just the way it looks, like the way that that squat moves? Was it super-hard this time, super-easy one day? So with myself, I'm a pretty consistent lifter. I know how things move. Like say, just for instance, my opening squat of 275 kilos at the Arnold's, I only squatted that weight once in one gym session in this whole year. That's the heaviest squat I've done. But for a beginner, it's probably going to be a little bit different. So like that's when people say like, "Oh, you should pick your opening attempt as something you can do three reps with," then that might work for them but the chances of me being able to do three reps with something like, say it's 275 kilo or 280 kilo, that's a very, very heavy triple for me and based on that I wouldn't open with that. Like my heaviest triple like leading into a comp may be like 260 kilo, 265 kilo. So that doesn't always work. So like I always look at their form, how efficient they are with their form and how consistent they have been, and then you've got to really work the numbers back from there. But the first and most important thing is finding out what you think a third attempt is potentially going to be, and then you work backwards from that to really what makes sense.

Danny Lennon: Right, sure, and then obviously that ties into whether they're going in with the mindset of "I just want to get experience from this comp" as opposed to someone who's specifically going in just to win that weight category.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, so there are just really so many variables. So I think anyone out there who just wants to go and have a bit of fun and they're like relatively new to the sport, look at your training over the last few weeks and that's about three weeks out that you want to start sort of thinking about your attempts, so you can start visualizing these attempts in the gym while you

are training. And like the really basic role is something you can pause on your chest for three seconds and can still get it up with no problem, and then you can probably do two reps like that. And the deadlift, like open nice and light on your deadlifts because generally that's where you're going to make bigger jumps, is the deadlift, and the squat as well, so something you know you can do for an easily two to three reps on a bad day. But when you're more advanced, it's not going to be really about that. It's more or less just going to be a number that progresses you to your visualized third attempt.

So for me at this comp, it's going to be 300 kilo with 305 kilo as my third attempt, so I need to look back and think about what a good second attempt would be. So for me, looking at that right now, it's going to be around the 290-kilo mark and then the opening squat is going to be around the high 270s or even 280-kilo mark, and the chances of me even squatting that heavy in the gym will be probably...the heaviest squat I probably will be 280 kilo at the most, so.

Danny Lennon:

Because obviously you're competing at like the elite level of this sport right now, is there anything that in your mind at least, outside of say, genetics and stuff like that, is there anything in your mind that you would point to as the biggest factors that differentiate lifters that are just very, very good to those that actually become elite and are actually winning world-level competitions.

Brett Gibbs:

Yeah, definitely. There's one thing in particular that springs to mind and it's being obsessed with your passion. It's just like I don't go into the gym and sort of like get the job done and move like good amounts of weight. I'm obsessed with doing it. I don't want to just go and...like I want to move more. I'm never satisfied. Like I'll meet my goals, pat myself on the back, move on to the next one. It's that obsession that I have with just like just getting better and better and better, and I don't put limitations on myself.

And you'll notice it's the same with every champion. They want to be the best and they're obsessed with their craft. They're not just like...they're not just sort of going about and found out they're pretty good. They've made themselves good. They've got that fire inside them just to keep getting better and better. They're never complacent with where they're at and they're also never satisfied.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, I think this whole thing of obsession is really interesting because sometimes people try and vilify it but maybe the best way I've heard it summed up was actually Ryan Doris, who was on the podcast recently.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah.

Danny Lennon: He had a great quote where he essentially said, "There's nothing I love more in life than to see someone who's obsessed with their craft and there's nothing more I despise than someone whose obsessed with themselves." And I think that's where maybe people get mixed up that, yeah, being obsessed with a certain endeavor or a certain passion of yours is actually a really, really good thing as opposed to anyone thinking, "Oh, you need balance in this or whatever," that this obsession and stuff like that is where good stuff happens.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. Yeah, like honestly, looking back over the years of training and how I've gotten to where I am right now, like I've always put like, I guess, [chuckles] as stupid as it may sound, like I've always...making it to the gym is like...is my number one priority. Like I never made excuses to miss the gym. I was like, if I had to work at 10 or 12 or a 15-hour shift of work, then on my mind for those 10 or 15 hours would still be, "Right, what time will I be getting out of here so I can get to the gym because I need to squat today?" Like it was like I need to get it done to achieve my goals that I've set for myself. I never took like a backwards seat from it. It was always on my priority list.

Danny Lennon: And obviously there's tons of success you've had along this journey and, like you said, all the things that you've won and competing at the very highest level, and with that maybe people forget that there are times where there are perhaps failures or at least feelings of failure. Is there any time that you can think of where you felt like you failed at something or felt like you didn't achieve what you wanted to achieve? Is there any moment that comes to mind?

Brett Gibbs: Yeah, there have been plenty of downs, that's for sure, and I have always like been honest about them as well. I think the biggest upset or thing that I look back at and I think was like a real changer for me was I was in New Zealand and I was one of the best lifters around—like this is in 2010 and I had already been on the scene for a couple of years—but looking at my Wilks, which is your body-to-power-weight ratio, I was one of the strongest in the country if not the strongest, and I thought I was a really good lifter. I had almost like this ego about me like, "Yeah, I'm the best

and I want to keep getting better,” you know? And I was like, “Right, it's time to represent New Zealand and go to the world championships.” So I flew over to Canada, it was in just that side of Vancouver, and I came second to last at my first world championships. And it wasn't just like I came second to last. Like I was like so far behind the competition it wasn't funny. Like it was just like, “You might be good in New Zealand, buddy, but you're not good on this stage here. Like you're almost a nobody on this stage.”

And that was a turning point for me because I thought I was so good but it was really just a wakeup call that like, “Look, Brett, you're not really that good,” and like, “These people around you, these guys are the future of the sport and if you want to be up there with them you've got to go back and reassess how you're going about things.” I mean, I think that was the biggest turning point for me and as much as it was a bad thing, like going away and getting hammered like that and being a bit down on myself and sort of feeling that I let everyone down going away and being so far behind, it was almost one of the best things as well, so.

Danny Lennon: Yeah, it's almost that thing of you either win or you learn, like that whole kind of concept of it's often the times where you don't win or you fail at something that they're the biggest teachers in terms of lessons that we can learn.

Brett Gibbs: Yeah. Yeah.

Danny Lennon: That's actually really interesting to hear. One thing I did want to ask about, Brett, just before we start to wrap up here, was that you've obviously been in contact with and surrounded yourself with some really, really impressive people. Is there anyone or any particular conversation even that sticks out that maybe was something particularly impactful? Maybe you met someone or had a certain conversation with a friend or a mentor or anything that you took a big lesson from or a piece of advice that's particularly impactful that comes to mind off the top of your head?

Brett Gibbs: I don't know if it was just like one conversation or anything like that, but it's like...and there are these so many inspiring people that I've met like doing things or sometimes a lot of them social media or that, but I think for me like that's really built who I am is definitely my hometown, my home gym, Wai Weight Gym. The owner of that gym, Bevan McKenzie, and Spike, who's the guy Bevan referred me to who was the strongest guy in the gym at the time, and I think it was like having that mentorship from

these people who had been doing the craft for so long, and I really think I just took a lot of inspiration I guess from these guys and like almost ingrained it into myself that—that sort of paved the way for me. Without those individuals in my life at that time, without a doubt I would not be sitting here right now talking to you.

Danny Lennon: Before I get to the kind of final question, maybe you could just let people know, if they want to track you down online and on social media, where can they find you and any links you want to refer people to.

Brett Gibbs: Yup, So the usual, on Instagram my name is bg_waiweight. I do have a coaching service, so my coaching service is Gold Signature Coaching. It's a website, GoldSignatureCoaching.com. If you guys do have any questions for me at all, I'm always happy to discuss any training ideas, anything like that. If you want to run anything past me, my email is brett@goldsignaturecoaching.com. And you can find pretty much like any training video of myself, I have a YouTube channel that I release videos every few days. It's pretty much me just like training, talking about training, how things are going for me and my clients. Just search Brett Gibbs on YouTube and you'll be able to see my channel there.

Danny Lennon: Awesome. And for everyone listening, I'll link up to all that stuff that Brett has just mentioned in the show notes so you can click through and connect with him on social and find all the other stuff that he just mentioned. With that, Brett, it comes to the final question I always try and end the show on and it's this kind of big, maybe open, broad question, so hopefully it doesn't catch you by surprise too much. It's simply, and this could be to do with anything even outside of what we discussed today, and it's just if you could advise people to do one thing each day that would improve their life in some aspect, what would that one thing be?

Brett Gibbs: If you have goals, go and get them, like go and do something to make a step to achieving them. Don't get down on yourself. Just always stay positive and always think ahead and do something with your day, like go and take it on. The night before, if you know you've got something to do, write it down and go and do it the next day. Just don't let things fall further and further behind because that's when stuff just starts to get out of control and can take away from some of the happiness throughout your day because you've always got something on your mind. Take action on stuff and you'll see what a positive impact that has on you and your mood or you as a person and there's just so much things because you have a lot

less stress and you don't have anything on your mind because you know you've done what you can each and every day.

Danny Lennon: Brett, this has been a really, really good conversation. Thank you so much for taking the time out, buddy. I really, really appreciate it.

Brett Gibbs: It's been awesome, man.

Danny Lennon: I know you're going to crush it at World's in Texas, so I can't wait to see your performance there, man, and we'll be hopefully chatting again soon, my friend.

Brett Gibbs: Oh, I'd love to. Thank you so much for having me on and thank you to everyone who has tuned in. It's been an awesome experience, man.

Danny Lennon: Awesome. Take care, my friend.

Brett Gibbs: Thank you, buddy. Talk soon.

Danny Lennon: So there we go. I hope you took tons of insightful stuff from that episode. Remember to go over and hit up Brett over on Instagram at his handle, [bg_waiweight](#), and let him know how much you took from this episode and you enjoyed it. I'll also in the show notes put a link up to all Brett's other social channels including his YouTube channel where you can follow his preparations for the IPF World's if you're listening to this as the episode has come out. If you're listening to it a bit later, then you probably already know the result of the championship, so it might be interesting to go and hear what we said beforehand. Also in those show notes is the option to get the full transcript to this episode and all other episodes for absolutely free, and that's just at [SigmaNutrition.com/episode122](#).

Like I mentioned at the outset, for those of you newer listeners with an interest in powerlifting, then there are some previous podcast episodes that may be of particular interest to you. If you go back to Episode 78, you'll find Greg Nuckols; in Episode 79, Eric Helms talks specifically about nutrition for powerlifting; and in Episode 103, we had Alberto Nunez of 3DMJ; and then most recently in Episode 114, I think, another IPF lifter, Ryan Doris, was on the show. So go download those episodes and have a listen.

If you want to connect with me, then my Instagram handle is [dannylennon_sigmanutrition](#), and then if you want to get me on Snapchat, my name there is just [lennondanny](#), that's all the one word. And that brings this week's episode to a close. I really hope you enjoyed the episode and if

you did I'd be extremely grateful to anyone who maybe puts a post about it on social media or shares it somewhere, and if you do, just make sure you tag me in it so I can come and say thank you directly. Other than that, as usual, I always appreciate the reviews you guys are leaving on iTunes as well as everyone who continues to support the show on Patreon.com. It means so much to me, so thank you, guys. It's amazing to see that support. And you guys who continue to download the show every week and listen every week are the people who make it what it is, so I just want to say thank you.

And with that, we will end this week's episode and I will talk to you next week when we're going to be chatting with Dr. Donald Layman on some areas around protein synthesis. So, hope you tune in for that, and I will talk to you then.