

# Bossi Takes 3<sup>rd</sup> at BENCH AMERICA in Chicago

Paul Bossi thinks he could have won the 220-pound weight class Saturday at Bench America, one of the biggest bench press competitions ever held in the United States.

On his third of three lifts, he went for 560 pounds. Ralph Young had already done 575; a weight Bossi has never gotten but knew was within reach.

Instead of risking not placing in the top three by missing 575, Bossi settled for a more manageable weight and finished third at the event in Chicago.

"I was debating whether I was going to go for the win or not," said Bossi, a teacher at Pasquotank High and wrestling coach at Currituck Middle School. "I could go 575 and take the gold home or go 560 and at least take bronze.

"You do all that and if you don't come back with something, all's it is just a fish story." Maybe Bossi didn't win, but he can at least claim he's the nation's third-strongest man in the 220-weight class.

Bossi opened up at 500 pounds and went 550 on his second lift. Only he and Young successfully completed all three attempts.

Lifters wear constrictive shirts as support for their muscles and joints, and Bossi had considered doing 500 raw, or without the shirt. After watching a few other lifters, he thought better of the idea.

"I chickened out from going raw," he said. "I saw everybody else bombing out and my nerves were going. People were puking left and right. It was making you so scared in front of all these people and TV.

"It was very, very nerve-wracking. But once you're up there and your music's playing, you're just so pumped up."

Had Bossi gone for 555 on his second attempt, as he said he wished he had done, he would have had third place secured before his third attempt. Thus he could have gone for 575 and the victory. The most he's ever lifted his 565.

Going into the event, Bossi knew he might go up against people on steroids, as the event was non-drug testing. He said, however, that he was surprised at the number of drug-free lifters he saw.

And he was pleased, he said, to meet many of his peers for the first time, drug-free or not.

"In my weight class, four of us were hanging out, laughing, joking, just having a good time and getting to know each other," Bossi said. "It's a big friendship thing. It was basically Powerlifting 101.

"I learned a whole lot this weekend. It was like going to a seminar or something. I met a lot of new people, a lot of new contacts. I had some people helping me; I helped a few other people."

Bossi's next competition will take place Aug. 23-24 in New Jersey at the U.S.A. Powerlifting nationals. If he places first or second he'll get a chance to represent America at the International Powerlifting Federation world championships in Slovakia.

For now, though, Bench America has been Bossi's biggest competition.

"It was pretty crazy," he said. "It was wild. Like nothing I've ever experienced before."