

50 Years Old...Strong As I've Ever Been (Deano's 2022 Fitness Update)



DEANO'S
2022
FITNESS
UPDATE

50 Years Old...
Strong As I've Ever Been

TL/DR: 2022 was my most active year yet! I wasted 9 years in my fitness journey not lifting weights. I've spent the last 3 years lifting weights for strength. It is the best thing I've ever done. I am the strongest I have ever been. Life changing! Strength improves your quality of life in just about everything you set out to do.

My 12-Year Fitness Journey

In a nutshell, use it or lose it!

Year	Primary Activity	
2011	Bike	Got a GPS watch and an old mountain bike and began riding on the road.
2012	Bike/Run/Weights	Got after it. Continued riding the bike longer distances, started doing Couch to 5k (running), and did a complicated weightlifting workout program in my basement and P90X.
2013	Bike	Wondered how people lifted weights (always sore so I stopped) and rode my bike (but much less).
2014	Bike	Basically nothing.
2015	Bike	Got more serious on my road bike (commuted to/from work on it). My goal was to get my massive waist (42 inches!?) under control.
2016	Bike	Rode my bike a ton (crossed 2,200 miles and did a century ride on my birthday). When winter set in I did P90X.
2017	Bike/Walk	Finished winter doing a complicated weightlifting workout program then back on the bike. Rode my bike a little less (1,500 miles) and walked a little more.
2018	Bike/Walk/Weights	Rode bike much less (down to 800 miles), and walked a bit more, did machine weightlifting workouts at the YMCA during winter.
2019	Walk/Bike/Weights	I walked much, much more (550+ miles this year) than I biked (only 950 miles this year). Late in the year the machines I used at the YMCA disappeared and I switched to regular weight training (the Starting Strength program). I was intimidated as hell stepping into the weight room!
2020	Weights/Walk	Focused on weight training (using heavy weights and compound lifts in the Starting Strength program). Walked a good deal (250+ miles) and biked very little.
2021	Weights/Walk	Focused on weight training (continued the Starting Strength program). Walked 200+ miles.
2022	Weights/Walk	Focused on weight training (continued the Starting Strength program). Converted to a 4 Day Split programming for most of the year. Worked on getting MUCH more consistent. This was my most active year yet (with most of the effort in the gym lifting). Walked 200+ miles.

Totals	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Grand Total
Activities	23	148	48	5	119	159	135	114	247	156	187	287	1,628
Biking													
Miles	169	1,000	346	29	692	2,199	1,519	819	950	133	135	118	8,109
Activities	18	79	37	3	99	128	72	52	61	12	17	13	591
Walking													
Miles	9	67	8	1	20	26	101	86	552	254	226	203	1,553
Activities	4	27	10	1	14	22	45	31	166	76	81	118	595
Weights													
Activities	1	42	1	1	6	9	18	31	20	68	89	156	442

Lessons Learned On My Fitness Journey

As I finish 2022, I now realize that over the years I have wasted a lot of time doing things that didn't help me progress my health in the right direction. In 2011 when I started I wanted to lose my gut and operated under the principle of 'use it or lose it'. This was better than the alternative (i.e. not doing anything). That said, running, biking, and using machines for weight training was all a complete waste of time. Time spent walking probably was not completely wasted but it wasn't moving the needle. Weight training (keyword "training") is a must-do activity.

Three years ago, I decided to start lifting weights. I followed the Starting Strength program which focuses on compound lifts and only 4-5 exercises. The program is designed to get you as strong as possible as efficiently as possible. I wrote about my thoughts at the end of my first year doing the program here: <http://deanorolls.com/2020/12/13/1-year-lifting-weights-my-progress-and-what-ive-learned/>

My thoughts have not changed on the program. It is fantastic!

In retrospect deciding to follow this program is the best decision I have ever made in my life. I've not turned into a gym bro. Anyone looking at me might not even be able to tell I lift weights. Regardless, I feel better than I've felt in years and I'm the strongest I have ever been in my life.

Along the way, I read a book called The Barbell Prescription. It was probably the most life-altering book I've ever read. It was the first time I understood why lifting weights and being strong was so important. It really lit a fire in me to stick with this program and push myself constantly. Lifting weights is hard both physically and mentally. Regardless, strength improves your quality of life in just about everything you set out to do.

So why was all the running and biking a waste of time? Strength is a persistent adaptation. Once you have built strength it is slow to erode. Cardiovascular conditioning is much less so. Time I spent biking a ton I was benefiting from it while doing it. When I stopped the benefit stopped (and the conditioning quickly evaporated). With strength building, I maintain an elevated level of strength for the rest of my life.

Any time spent on machines or doing other programs besides the Starting Strength program's 4 major lifts was also wasted. The 4 major compound lifts can be loaded with increasing loads for a long, long time (think years). They also work the body as a whole by doing movement patterns we are designed to do. This is functional strength training that carries over to everything you do each day. The way you know you are getting stronger is to add weight to the bar (while keeping all other variables the same). This program does that and continues to do that indefinitely. This full-body strength building cannot be more effectively replicated with other methods.

I've studied weight training and diet a ton over the past couple of years. I listened to more podcasts on the subjects this year than any year in the past. The podcast I listened to more than any other this year was the Starting Strength podcast. I learn a ton from this podcast but if you want to learn the absolute basics I compiled a list of episodes to focus on here: <https://deanorolls.com/2022/06/30/starting-strength/>

If you learn about The Novice Effect, The Two Factor Model, A Clarification, The First 3 Questions, and How To Do An NLP you will know the basics. I wish I'd listened to Physical Strength Is The Most Important Thing In Your Life a few decades ago.

All that brain training helped me get my activities working better. I feel like I got things pretty dialed in during 2022 and feel like it was my most productive year so far. I've been more active this year than ever. 61% of the days in 2022 I did an activity (either weight training or walking).

Year Totals	Days Active	% Days Active	Total Hours
2011	22	6%	20
2012	141	39%	153
2013	41	11%	38
2014	7	2%	4
2015	85	23%	82
2016	145	40%	216
2017	118	32%	169
2018	108	30%	146
2019	225	62%	255
2020	140	38%	172
2021	173	47%	225
2022	223	61%	257

I also lifted much more weight (volume) this year than last year. I did more workouts this year than in the prior two years. My average weight used in each workout was higher across the board as well. This means my tonnage was higher than in previous years. I had more weight on the bar this year than in prior years (and more often). This is even with the addition of using a Four Day Split programming method where I was incorporating 'light' workouts for my lower body lifts.

Average Work Set Weights						
	Workouts	Weight	Squat	Bench	Press	Deadlift
Yr 1 ('20)	77	183	168	103	81	202
Yr 2 ('21)	89	185	197	144	97	233
Yr 3 ('22)	153	184	199	147	100	245

I've studied the Starting Strength model enough that I could probably coach it to others at this point. I have even done this with some family members. If you have questions, I'd be happy to help.

2022 Review

Consistency! Everything this year was about consistency or things that were keeping me from being consistent.

- Time Out Of The Gym – There were a couple of times I took a layoff this year. I started the year off after taking 14 days off due to vacation. Then Spring Break, then another family vacation, then work and/or work trips. Some of these stacked up effectively having me out of the gym for a month. Each time I'd come back and need to 'reset' to some degree. I'd spend time working my way back up to where I was when I left off (after being really sore on the restart). It is hard to make progress moving forward when you constantly have to retread ground you've already tread before. It is also frustrating. But this is life! I made the decision at the end of June that I was going to be more consistent. I would get my workouts in no matter what else was going on. In the last half of the year, the only time I missed more than a few days in the gym was when Fall Break and a work trip were stacked up. I used this time to recover and get ready for a big year-end push.
- Diet Changes – Early in the year I messed around with a low-carb diet which also impacted my training. Lifting heavy weights and eating almost no carbs do not go well together. I abandoned this diet and ate what I needed to eat to train the way I needed to train.
- Form Issues – As I pushed my squat weight higher and higher I kept telling myself that my form wasn't correct and that the bar needed to be lower on my back. I did this twice once in February and once in August. Both times I realized I was being stupid (and was wrong). Both times I wound up hurting my arms. In August, because I was messing with my form on my squat I gave myself a case of bicep tendinitis (see below).
- Injury Issues – When I was messing around with 'fixing' my low bar squat bar position I inflamed my bicep which plagued my upper body lifts for the last quarter of the year. I spent most of the last part of the year doing rehab on this (with low weight and tons of reps). Over time I've worked my way back up to close to where I left off. But it has been slow going (and I'm not there yet). This has been the most severe injury I've had to deal with and had a huge impact on my upper body training.

When I made the commitment to get more consistent I saw the impact it had on my training and progress. If you want to make progress in weight training you must be consistent. That is easier said than done. I have a full-time job, a family, friends, and more hobbies than I have time for. Life easily gets in the way of making it to the gym every time you need to do so. That is part of what makes weight training hard. You have to find a way to make it work.

This is where I'm at now (my current PR at reps) on all my lifts:

1 Rep Maxs (Calculated Based On Top Set PR)				
Squat				
Year	Body Weight	1RM (Calc'd)	x Body Weight	Max Repped and Date
Yr 1 ('20)	185	242	1.31	215x5x3 on 12/17/2020
Yr 2 ('21)	185	248	1.34	220x5x3 on 12/4/2021
Yr 3 ('22)	193	270	1.40	240x5x3 on 11/30/2022
Deadlift				
Year	Body Weight	1RM (Calc'd)	x Body Weight	Max Repped and Date
Yr 1 ('20)	182	264	1.45	235x5x1 on 3/4/2020
Yr 2 ('21)	185	304	1.64	270x5x1 on 12/14/2021
Yr 3 ('22)	190	321	1.69	285x5x1 on 12/20/2022
Bench Press				
Year	Body Weight	1RM (Calc'd)	x Body Weight	Max Repped and Date
Yr 1 ('20)	185	169	0.91	150x5x3 on 12/8/2020
Yr 2 ('21)	185	186	1.01	165x5x3 on 12/15/2021
Yr 3 ('22)	186	194	1.04	172x5x3 on 8/23/2022
Press				
Year	Body Weight	1RM (Calc'd)	x Body Weight	Max Repped and Date
Yr 1 ('20)	185	107	0.58	95x5x3 on 12/29/2020
Yr 2 ('21)	185	118	0.64	105x5x3 on 12/5/2021
Yr 3 ('22)	186	129	0.69	115x5x3 on 9/3/2022

Targets	
Squat	
1.5x (287) is Intermediate Target (All Ages) 170-180 Bodyweight (All Ages) Intermediate Target = 276-292 50 Year Old Intermediate Target = 255	
Deadlift	
2.0x (336) is Intermediate Target (All Ages) 170-180 Bodyweight (All Ages) Intermediate Target = 322-340 50 Year Old Intermediate Target = 299	
Bench Press	
1.25x (217) is Intermediate Target (All Ages) 170-180 Bodyweight (All Ages) Intermediate Target = 209-221 50 Year Old Intermediate Target = 193	
Press	
0.8x (142) is Intermediate Target (All Ages) 170-180 Bodyweight (All Ages) Intermediate Target = 136-145 50 Year Old Intermediate Target = 126	

I don't do 1 rep max tries or anything like that. Most exercises are 3 sets of 5 reps (after warm-up sets). What is listed are the maximum amounts I've done in my final work set for each of these exercises in the calendar year. There is a formula you can use to calculate what your hypothetical 1 rep max would be based on the weight and reps lifted. It isn't perfect but it is helpful information.

I use these to figure out how much I'm capable of lifting as a percentage of my body weight. I then compare these to targets. I look at what an intermediate lifter should be able to lift (of all ages). An intermediate lifter is someone who has trained consistently for a few years (and is likely stronger than 50% of all lifters). I also look at the same information for people in my target weight range.

I'm a short, sawed-off troll so I won't be able to hit the same targets as normal human-sized people. I also look for the same information for people my age. I'm 50 so I won't be able to hit the same targets as a 25-year-old male. Looking at all of these values helps me assess if I'm in the right neighborhood on my lifts and making good progress.

I'm pretty happy with where I'm at on all lifts. I've gotten stronger each year since I started doing this.

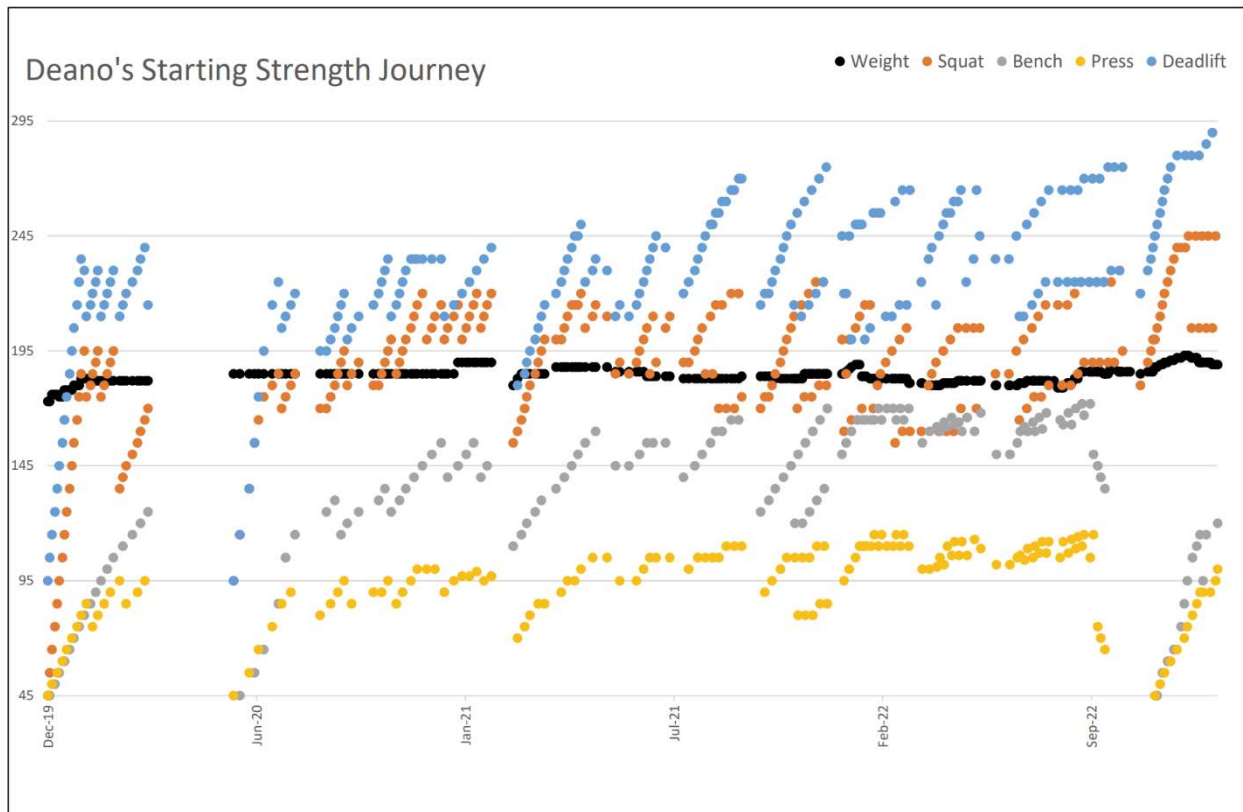
I'm also ahead of people in my age bracket. I'm in the neighborhood with people in my weight class. I'm decently close to intermediates in all age groups. So, all you high schoolers doing your half-squat ego lifts better look out because Deano's old ass is headed your way.

The biggest thing about all this is I'm as strong as 50% of lifters. I'm an intermediate lifter. When compared to the average person out walking around (non-lifter) that likely puts me in the top percentiles of the population.

I'll be able to get off the toilet when I'm 85! This is my only goal! HA!

My Starting Strength Journey

This is what my weight training “career” has looked like since I began.



The Starting Strength program is 4 exercises. It is not terribly complicated, but it is hard (physically and mentally).

Workouts – I lifted 156 times in 2022. 156 times I got off my butt, stopped myself from talking myself out of going to the gym, went to the gym, and lifted heavy weights. This is no small task. There were plenty of days I didn’t want to be anywhere close to the gym or under a heavy bar. You have to train your brain too!

Body Weight – I’ve been around 184 all year. At 5’ 9” to get stronger I probably need to gain more and get to 210+. I don’t eat enough to do this, however. I’m not worried about my weight at all, however. I wouldn’t be upset to gain weight (and definitely don’t want to lose weight). I plan to keep doing what I’m doing and whatever the scale says it will say it. Towards the end of the year when I was focused on getting my squat and deadlift up, I was eating a ton and got up to 193. That is the heaviest I’ve ever been (and also the strongest). This was by design!

Squat (Best Performance 240x5x3 on 11/30/2022 or 270 1RM) – These are low bar/parallel leg squats (no cheating). Not ‘ass to grass’ (close) but also not high squats either. These have a huge range of motion and involve the entire body. They are tough both mentally and physically. Heavy squat day is by far the most mentally tough day for me. Regardless, I am very happy to be able to squat (for reps) over my body weight. Doing hard stuff that sucks has a payoff, however. I got really focused on making my squat go up upon returning from Fall Break. I figured if my upper body was hurt and in rehab, I should

throw all my energy into my lower body workout. I'd end up last year at 220x5x3. Early in 2022, I hit 225x5x3 for the first time. 4 "big plates" on the bar for reps was a huge milestone for me! It was also an immense psychological barrier for me! Once I broke through the 225x5x3 barrier (again later in the year) I pushed onward and made it up to 240x5x3. I almost nailed 245 (did 4x4 on 12/29) but didn't make it before the end of the year. As I said earlier, I spent a bunch of wasted energy in 2022 working on my squat bar position form. This was stupid and I won't make that mistake again. I even messed around and hurt my arms in the process. I was fine to begin with and I should have just kept putting weight on the bar and lifted it! Dumb Deano!

Deadlift (Best Performance 285x5x1 on 12/20/2022 or 321 1RM) – I end up last year at 270x5x1 (and it was my strongest lift at that time). By the second half of this year, I was back in that neighborhood consistently. When I got back from Fall Break I hit it hard (along with my squat) and wound up completing 285x5x1. I'd had some trouble at 280 but listened to David Goggins on Joe Rogan and realized I was being a little bitch. I went to the gym that night and picked up 280 5 times (not 4 like before). Then went on and did 285 for the next workout. Mind, over, matter! I almost got 290 (did 4,1 on 12/26) but couldn't get it before the end of the year.

Bench Press (Best Performance 172x5x3 on 8/23/2022 or 194 1RM) – I was making 2-pound jumps on my bench press and adding weight regularly. I made it up to 172x5x3 before I hurt my arm. When I messed up my arm ('fixing' my squat bar position) I started dropping weight. That didn't help because it wasn't getting any better. I dropped down to doing 400-rep workouts with dumbbells. Over several months I worked the inflammation out of my inflamed tendon with tons of reps and slowly adding weight. By November I was back to being able to lift the 45-pound bar (for high reps) without pain. By the end of December, I hit weights where I was back to doing 5x3 workouts. I continued to add 5 pounds a workout as long as I felt no pain. By the end of the year, I'd made it back to 120x5x3. I'm not close to my prior best performance but it should come fairly quickly now. I'm trying to remain very patient in order to not have a relapse/setback.

Press (Best Performance 115x5x3 on 9/3/2022 or 129 1RM) – I make 1-pound jumps on my press. I finally made it to 'medium-sized wheels' (35-pound plates) on the bar (115x5x3). I actually completed this weight after I hurt my arm. I decided it was unwise to keep pushing hard on my upper body lifts until I rehabbed my arm injury. I followed the same protocol as described above. By the end of the year, I'd made it back to 100x5x3. I'll keep climbing until I'm back fully (while remaining patient along the way).

Cardio

I don't do 'cardio'. I did walk/hike a good bit in 2022 (200+ miles). I don't consider that cardio. There is nothing wrong with cardio. I just believe focusing on strength is way more important. Also, if you put heavy weights on you (like I do now) and lift them a few times you'll quickly realize that there is plenty of 'cardio' involved in that activity.

Nutrition

If picking a strength training program is complicated and confusing...enter nutrition. For most of the year, I followed a similar plan to what I'd been following the prior year.

I generally would intermittent fasting for 16 hours and eat for 8. When I did eat, I'd focus on high-protein foods. I generally tried to stay away from 1) sugar, 2) seed oils, and 3) refined grains. We eat out most nights and even when sticking with 'healthier options' I know I'm still getting seed oils and probably more sugar than I'd like. This is not ideal but convenient and something the wife and I like to do.

In mid-October, I decided I was going to push my lower body lifts up. I cut out intermittent fasting and upped my calories considerably. I pushed my lifts up and also my body weight to 193. This was by design. Eating that much is very hard work, however!

Sun

Most of the time as I am having lunch I am also soaking in some sun. I try to get a good deal of sun over the year. I think there are all kinds of benefits to this for someone like me who sits at a desk (indoors) most days. The biggest reason I do it is to up my Vitamin D levels.

Dumping Iron

The biggest change I've introduced in the past year is to 'dump iron'. After reading P. D. Mangan's book *Dumping Iron* (<http://deanorolls.com/2021/12/10/dumping-iron-p-d-mangan/>) I finally pulled the trigger. I gave blood 6 times in 2022! I think this might be one of the most important changes I've made in my health to date. I'll continue to give blood every 60 days for as long as I can. High iron is associated with all kinds of bad things. Us boys don't really have a way to get rid of it and it adds up over time. I'm hoping giving blood keeps chronic illness far away from my old body for as long as possible (and also helps someone in the process). Some lucky person out there will have the blood of a champion coursing through your veins! HA!

Life Expectancy

All this fitness, working out, eating right is supposed to do a couple of things 1) make my remaining years on this planet higher quality and 2) maybe extend the number of years I make it.

I found a pretty decent life expectancy calculator online several years ago (www.livingto100.com). When I worked through all the questions on my birthday in 2018 it said I'd live to be 86. Not bad.

Since that time I've incorporated many changes into my life. I've not looked at it again until recently. When I reworked it this year it said 93! That's 7 more years of these updates I get to write! HA, lucky you!?!

I have no clue how accurate something like that might be. Regardless, I'll take it! At age 50 now I'm over halfway to the end (YIKES!). I want to make sure my last 43 years are as high quality as they can be. I'll keep at all this until the bitter end!

Hormones

During the summer my son Preston finally convinced me I needed to make some additional changes. I needed to do things that would help me better manage my hormones. Some of these include: using less plastic, filtering my drinking water, changing my personal care products, sweating more, getting more sun, eating better, exercising more, lowering stress, limiting medications, and adding supplements. I spent many hours researching all this and wrote about it here: <https://deanorolls.com/2022/07/04/10-more-things-im-changing-to-better-manage-my-hormones/>

Bloodwork

In December I ran a ton of bloodwork. I am my own doctor, so I order the test I want to run and then analyze the results. I order 10 different batches of blood tests. From these tests, I look at 34 different markers and use them to analyze how old Deano is getting along. I plan to repeat this testing annually.

ANNUAL CHECK-UP PANEL (Requires 10-12 hour fast)

1. Complete Blood Count (CBC)
 1. White blood cell count.
 2. White blood cell differential.
 3. Red blood cell count.
 4. Red blood cell density.
 5. Hemoglobin levels.
 6. Blood platelet count.
2. Cholesterol Lipid with Ratio (Lipids Panel)
 1. High Density Lipoproteins (HDL) = Good cholesterol.
 2. Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL) = Bad cholesterol.
3. Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH)
 1. TSH
4. Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)
 1. Sodium (Na)
 2. Potassium (K)
 3. Chloride (C)
 4. Carbon Dioxide (CO2)
 5. Albumin (Alb)
 6. Alkaline Phosphatase (ALP)
 7. Bilirubin (Bil) Total
 8. Aspartate Transaminase (AST)
 9. Alanine Transaminase (ALT)
 10. Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN)
 11. Total Protein
 12. Calcium (Ca)
 13. Creatinine (Cr)
 14. Glucose
 15. Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR)
5. Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1C)
 1. HbA1C

Insulin (Requires 8 Hour Fast)

1. Insulin (In) Test / Fasting Insulin Test

GLUCOSE (Requires 8 Hour Fast)

1. Glucose (Serum) Test / Fasting Blood Glucose Test

HIGH SENSITIVITY C-REACTIVE PROTEIN CARDIAC

1. High Sensitivity, Cardiac (HSCRP)

TESTOSTERONE

1. Testosterone Free
2. Testosterone Total

FERRITIN TEST

1. Ferritin

2023 Goal

My original goal in 2011 was to 'get in better shape'. In 2015 I got serious about 'losing my gut'. Everything I read said I was on a dark path to all kinds of problems if I didn't get that under control. In late 2019 I got serious about getting strong for the first time in my life. I've made decent progress over the years and I'm in the best shape of my life right now. Not too shabby for a 50-year-old geezer!

2023 is going to be the first year I make a major change in my journey from what I've been doing the past 3 years. I spent a great deal of time in December of this year doing research and hit the ground running on my new program the week of Christmas. By the way, starting a new fitness/nutrition plan the week of Christmas is not advised! HA! I won't say much more about it here but as I write this I feel about as dialed in as I have EVER felt on all this. 2023 is going to be an exciting year! You'll have to come back next year to find out what I did! HA!

Join Me!

If you use Strava, join me there. If you don't see me workout for a few too many days...let me have it!
<https://www.strava.com/athletes/19668663> 1/9/2021

