



Dear IGH,

Vol. 10 #3 is a fine issue; the Weiders are doing their part in allowing others to view some rare history. I am writing to comment on parts of the issue since I believe it warrants response. I know I promised an article to you (on Leo Stern); it is in the works. I really enjoyed Randy Roach's Bruce Randall article. When I first read of Randall in *Iron Man* I liked him for a number of reasons—mostly because he was different. He used good mornings a lot; I always liked that movement myself. His extremes in weight gaining and reducing were great examples of discipline; the resulting gains in muscular size and good overall balance were very inspiring. He of course had the perfect atmosphere to train like that being in the service at the time and access to the food and weights with freedom of schedule. I always thought he was a lot like Jim Haislop in that he could have gone a lot further had he been motivated in that direction—as it was, he did a lot.

I would like to comment on the Iron Grapevine letter [by John Coffee] about the top ten strongmen—all who follow the Iron Game for any period of time have their top choices, I am no different. When I first got enthused about the weights and getting stronger, Paul Anderson was a big influence—he is one of the men on my list also. There will be some names not on this list that might have great strength, but showed it with the aid of gear that aided them 20-40%. Over the recent years there have been changes in gear to aid the squat and bench press to move the lifts to incredible numbers. True strength can be judged by the deadlift, where the numbers have not changed much because the person does the lift, not some mummy suit that requires other want-to-be strongmen to put it on. I have seen lifters (?) that have bench shirts to aid them in benching 800-1000 pounds that could not lower 400-500 pounds to their chest because it was too light.

While my list will have ten very worthy candidates, I will not rank them 1 thru 10, mainly because of lifting in different eras—there are too many variables. Also some of the ten have been known to use pharma-

ceuticals which change the playing field. I do not begin to think this is the end-all be-all list—just one man's opinion.

Paul Anderson: his squatting and pressing prowess were incredible—a true phenomenon. I really do not care why so-called experts think he is not worthy.

Bill Kazmaier: World's Strongest Man 1980-81-82—he was far above the competition—truly focused on his craft. When I first met him and mentioned one of his competitors, it was like I pushed a button—his eyes and demeanor changed. One of a kind whose equal may not be seen again.

Don Reinhardt: the lifts he made in the mid 1970s with next to nothing in the way of supportive gear were incredible. The lifts stood as the best for years—he was (as Bill Kazmaier) a very balanced overall powerful man—I have met him and call him a friend. It is also easy to say he is one of the strongest men to ever walk the face of the earth.

Ken Patera: an all-around balanced lifter. Great hip and thigh strength and a great presser—very athletic as well, with great technique as an Olympic lifter.

Vasily Alexeev: a man who set record after record in Olympic lifting even though a lot of them were by small amounts—he had the ability to do more almost always—very good technique. Also a very smart lifter; on meet day, again great hip and back strength.

Svend Karlsen: a man with great hip, thigh and back/shoulder strength. He came through when it counted, an attribute that matters.

Zydrunas Savickas: a giant of a man who, like Bill Kazmaier, when compared to his competition, is on a different level. One common factor of WSM competitions is that most lifters do not last too long due to injuries; it is a very taxing endeavor.

Magnus Ver Magnusson: he won the title four times going against the best that were around; he would beat the pressers, the deadlifters, and the all-around men.

I will include two strongmen from an earlier era of physical culture as my last strongmen.

Louis Cyr: who had great overall strength even though certain tests of strength were not in use in his time (such as the squat). There is a reason that much has been written about him and the next strongman on my list.

Arthur Saxon: he was part of the trio, The Saxon Brothers, along with his brothers Kurt and Herman. Arthur was the strongest of the three; that is no slight on his brothers; it just shows his true greatness. He could

bent press over 300 pounds. (until you try the lift you have no idea how hard it is). He did a "two hands anyhow" lift of over 445 pounds—that is incredible!

In closing, good things to you both and keep up the good work.

Howard Havener
Manassas, Virginia

We're glad that you enjoyed the last issue and we appreciate your kind comments. We agree that Joe and Betty Weider deserve credit for giving back to the field that gave them so much, and we also agree that Bruce Randall is a true Iron Game original who warrants our attention. We received a number of other letters that made the same points, and we look forward to receiving your article about Leo Stern, another Iron Game original. Your list of the top ten strongest men was also a fascinating read, and you make a good point when you say that everyone who follows the Game closely has their favorite strongmen, and that you're no different. The nice thing about such lists is that in many ways they are so subjective that they are beyond proof, but not beyond argument . . . Dempsey-Louis, Hackenschmidt-Gama, Johnson-Feller, Ruth-Cobb, Chamberlain-Russell, Grimek-Park, Cyr-Apollon, Brown-Sayers, Anderson-Kazmaier, Woods-Nicklaus, Federer-Sampras, Gant-Inaba, Kono-Vardanian. We do wonder—since you make the indisputable claim that "some" of the men on your list used "pharmaceuticals"—who you think did not, other than the obvious two.



Dear IGH:

Congratulations to Jan on her thorough, balanced—and very important—presentation ("Size Matters: Reflections on Muscle, Drugs and Sport," Vol. 10, No. 3). I've often looked at an athlete or group of athletes and thought weight training, knowing that others may be thinking steroids. Modern weight training is not given the credit it deserves—and worse—lives and reputations are often destroyed in the process. Sports media is notoriously cynical and it seems that some academics are more concerned with career than accuracy. You were, of course, more kind in your assessment. At minimum, people are not well informed.

As you noted, the cynicism extends beyond

sports requiring muscle mass and strength into events such as the Tour de France. I argued on our website that Floyd Landis may have been a victim of the poisonous atmosphere you describe; see <http://www.cbass.com/FloydLandis.htm>. (Taking testosterone in the middle of a race would be pretty dumb, even crazy.)

Congratulations again, for a wonderful job of setting the record straight on the value of intelligent—and clean—weight training. I hope people are listening. Bob Hoffman is surely smiling down on you as well.

Clarence Bass
Albuquerque, New Mexico

It's always a treat to get a letter or an email from Clarence Bass—or Sea Bass, as we call him here at IGH—because his comments are always thoughtful, well-reasoned, and require no editing. Like Clarence, we continue to be astonished and dismayed at how little understanding there is on the part of average sports fans—and even sports journalists or academics who deal with sports—about the capacity of progressive weight training to dramatically transform the strength and muscular size of a young man's body. We say "young man" here not because we doubt the capacity of purposefully-lifted iron to remake the thews of those in their middle or even late years, but because the transformation is so much more profound and apparent in young adult men—particularly those with the genetic predisposition to build muscle and strength more easily. In young men such as these—and there are millions of them in the US at this time with such a predisposition—the changes can be so astonishing that it's almost like watching an old Walt Disney time-lapse film of the blooming of a flower. We recall the story George Eiferman told us about the time he went home after being away in the service for over a year during which he really hit the gym with a vengeance, only to be turned away at the door by family members who at first simply didn't recognize him. This was in the 1940s, long before synthetic anabolic steroids with their capacity to hasten such awe-inspiring hypertrophy had appeared on the scene, and it simply lends weight to the point Clarence makes. Knee-jerk snap judgments in these areas should be avoided. They fly in the face of the sort of truth embodied—literally—in the mind-bending physical history of George Eiferman and many others, all the way up to the quintessential change agent—Bruce Randall.

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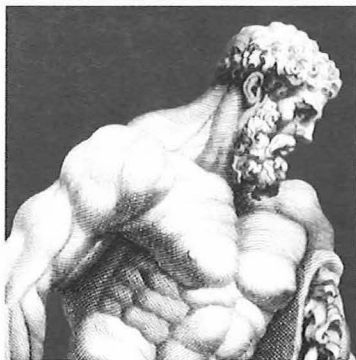
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