

Mighty Mitts

The Contest

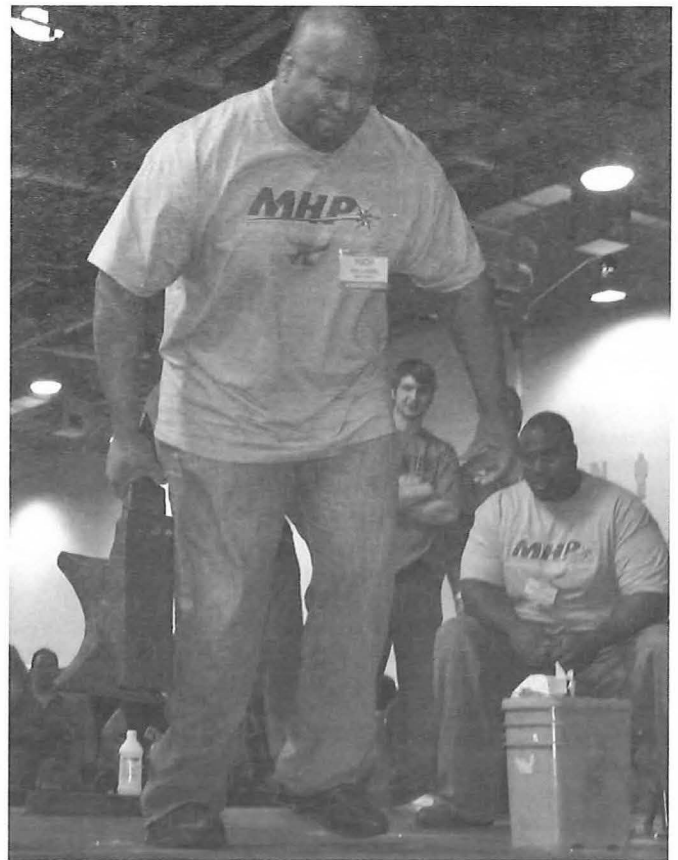
Terry Todd

The University of Texas

Over the weekend of March 5-7, 2010, in addition to the Arnold Strongman Classic's traditional tests of total body strength, we introduced a new feature for the crowds at the Expo Center—a sort of appetizer for the Strongman buffet. This new feature, "Mighty Mitts," was supported by MHP (our main sponsor) and also by Epicentr, a large building supply corporation located in the Ukraine. MM was a stand-alone contest and did not involve any of our Strongman competitors. Instead, it showcased ten men who are well-known or even famous for the strength of their hands. These men faced four challenges and could win up to \$1000 per event. The challenges took place atop the Expo Stage on Friday and Saturday, immediately before and after our Arnold Strongman Classic events.

Mighty Mitts was conceived as an extra attraction for fans of Strongman contests as well as for aficionados of "grip feats." Based on feedback following the contest it seemed clear that Mighty Mitts was popular and provided additional excitement for the tens of thousands of people who watched the Strongman contest this year. During the past couple of years, as I began more and more seriously to consider staging such a contest, I've done my best to think through which events should be conducted and who should be invited. As part of this effort I talked to a number of people—mainly to members of the Arnold Strongman Committee such as David Webster, Bill Kazmaier, Jan Todd, Steve Slater, and Odd Haugen—but for MM my primary co-conspirator has been Richard Sorin, to whom I and the entire grip community owe special thanks. Both Richard and I also listened to suggestions from iron gamers who've done a lot of grip work and thought a lot about hand strength.

One of our chief challenges this first year was to do all we possibly could to make Mighty Mitts an excit-



High school teacher Rich Williams of Charlottesville, Virginia, totally dominated the inaugural Mighty Mitts contest over the weekend of March 5-7, 2010. Williams, a protege of Richard Sorin, carried Jowett's 173-pound anvil all the way across the big expo stage and then rounded the corner and came partway back to the starting point for a total carry of almost 50 feet. Tex Henderson is seated in the background awaiting his turn.

ing contest to watch. If we could do this we believed MM would sell itself in the years to come and allow us to move forward in terms of covering expenses and increasing the prize package. Before we could even begin, of course, I had to sell the idea of MM to Jim Lorimer and, through him, to Arnold. As it turned out, they and the sponsors were very supportive and gave us the go-ahead to demonstrate that MM would be a good addition to the Arnold Sports Festival's many strength competitions, for which the weekend is justifiably famous.

Some readers might be interested to know the origin of the name of our contest. "Mitts," of course, is a colloquial term for "hands," seen in such phrases as, "Look at the mitts on that guy." In any case, after I had written a two-part article about hand and wrist strength in *Strength and Health* magazine in 1965, when I was a managing editor of that magazine, I decided to call the article, "Mighty Mitts." The article featured some fasci-

THE 2010 MIGHTY MITTS COMPETITORS

ANDREW DURNIAT

Home: Wooster, Ohio, USA

Stats: 6' 4"; 225 lbs.

Age: 31

Job: Owner/operator of Durniat Strength

Athletics: Ice Hockey in High School; All-American defenseman in lacrosse while at Ohio Wesleyan University; specializes in grip and feats of all-around strength and fitness.

MARK FELIX

Home: Lancashire, Great Britain (born in Grenada)

Stats: 6' 4"; 310 lbs.

Age: 43

Job: Plasterer and Professional Strongman

Athletics: Finished fourth in 2006 World's Strongest Man Contest; held world record in "Rolling Thunder" deadlift event with 301 pounds; holds British Record in the deadlift with 881 in an IPF event; can take a "hook grip" on a bar with a diameter of two inches.

STEVE GARDNER

Home: Gloucester, England

Stats: 6' 3"; 280-300 lbs.

Age: 45

Job: Supplement company owner/landlord

Athletics: Four-time British Grip Champion; current European Grip Champion; holds 10 British Hand Strength records; first to one-hand lift the Millennium Dumbbell.

WADE GILLINGHAM

Home: Marshall, Minnesota, USA

Stats: 6' 2"; 300 lbs.

Age: 38

Job: Computer Programmer/Database Administrator

Athletics: Longtime leader and promoter of grip strength events; former powerlifter and professional strongman; runs the "The Grip Gauntlet" for GNC; brother of Brad Gillingham, winner of several world championships in the International Powerlifting Federation and Karl Gillingham, strongman competitor and former winner of America's Strongest Man contest.

ODD HAUGEN

Home: Newbury Park, California and Sunndalsora Norway

Stats: 6' 4"; 299 lbs.

Age: 60

Job: President of dotFIT worldwide

Athletics: Bodybuilding, weightlifting, powerlifting, football, strongman; competed in three World's Strongest Man contests; Norwegian national titles in bodybuilding, weightlifting, and powerlifting; promoter of strongman contests.

SHEDRICK "TEX" HENDERSON

Home: Grand Prairie, Texas, USA

Stats: 6' 8"; 367 lbs.

Age: 33

Job: Home theater installation and design

Athletics: Played football and threw the shot put in college; played Arena Football; competed in powerlifting and strongman; squatted 1025 pounds.

JEDD JOHNSON

Home: Towanda, Pennsylvania, USA

Stats: 6' 2"; 255 lbs.

Age: 31

Job: Human Resource Manager

Athletics: Played college baseball at Marshall University; competed in strongman from 2002 to 2006; founded the website DieselCrew.com in 2002.

SERGEI ROMANCHUK

Home: Kiev, Ukraine

Stats: 6' 2"; 304 lbs.

Age: 27

Job: Security director and strongman competitor

Athletics: Considered to have the strongest hands in the Ukraine; was added to the event with less than a month to train after strong-handed pro wrestler Mark Henry was unable to get time off from his weekend matches.

RICHARD (RICH) WILLIAMS

Home: Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

Stats: 6' 4"; 400 lbs.

Age: 38

Job: High school teacher

Athletics: Three time All-American as a college lineman; also threw the shot put in college; drafted in the second round in the NFL; plans to expand into Strongman events; learned about grip from Richard Sorin.

CHET WOODALL

Home: Athens, Georgia, USA

Stats: 6' 6"; 286 lbs.

Age: 36

Job: Fitness coordinator at a wellness center

Athletics: Played basketball for four years at Emmanuel College; won National Grip Strength Contest in 2006, 2007, and 2008; former Strongman competitor.

nating old photos, including one showing my hand next to the hand of August Hartkopf, an Austin mechanic who was acromegalic—a condition which is characterized by too much Human Growth Hormone and by the resulting physiological changes such as increased hand and foot thickness, facial disfigurement, and, in the case of people who haven't finished growing, increased height. In that particular photo, even though I weighed well over 300 pounds at that time, my hand next to that of Hartkopf looked like the hand of a child. For whatever reason, many old-time iron gamers seem to remember the article, and even the name. What's more, Richard Sorin claims that the article was one of the things which set him on his future path, which has been that of a pioneer in the field of grip strength. Thus it was that once I decided to stage the contest at the Arnold Sports Festival it seemed appropriate to call it Mighty Mitts.

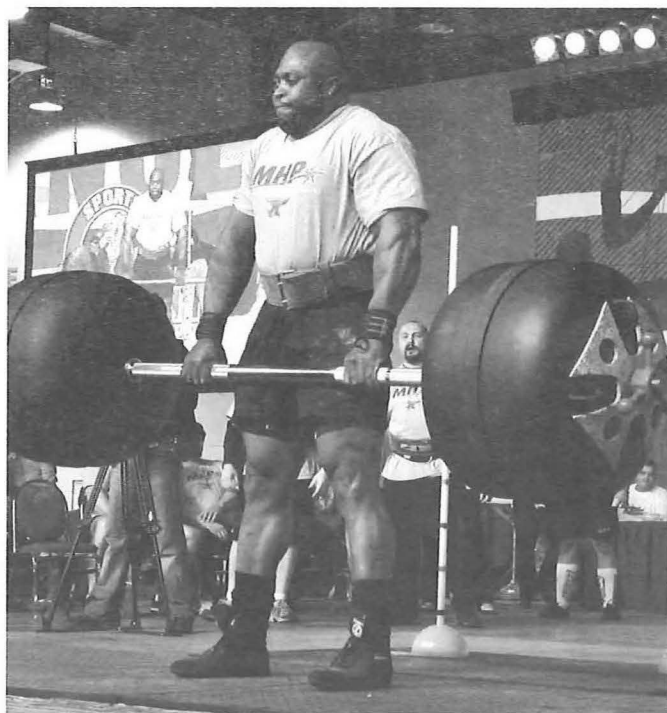
As soon as we began to go forward with the event we sent the word out through a number of channels and sat back to see if we'd have any takers. We hoped the event would bring out all—or at least most—of the men with big reputations in the small but passionate world of hand strength, and we were not disappointed; almost all of the men we most wanted to come contacted us to ask to be included.

The main reason we feared we might not get the turnout we wanted was that although we were able to offer \$1000 to the winner of each of our four events we lacked the sponsorship money to pay any of their transportation or other expenses, as we have always done for our traditional Strongmen. The difference, of course, is that the Strongman sport is much better known and, therefore, more appealing to potential sponsors. Even so, the top grip men in the world were willing to pay their own way in order to be part of what seemed to them and to us to be a historic event. Never before had there been a "Grip Contest," in front of thousands of cheering fans, with a thousand bucks on the line in each event. In short, the *Gripmeisters* all wanted in on it. Not to mention the fact that Grip Guys, in general, aren't inclined to shy away from a challenge.

THE MIGHTY MITTS CHALLENGES FOR 2010

The Jowett Anvil

In the early years of the 20th century, George F. Jowett was a very prominent figure in the physical culture world as a writer, lifter, and promoter. One of the



Mark Felix, England's veteran strongman, has made world "grip records" in feats of hand strength, and he was first alternate for the 2010 ASC. However, when Donnie Thompson dropped out of the Classic, Felix decided to take part in Mighty Mitts, not the Arnold Strongman Classic.

stunts for which he is most famous featured a large blacksmith's anvil, weighing 173 pounds, which he supposedly gripped by the horn with one hand, swung up toward his shoulder, flipped so that he caught it upside down in his hand, and then pressed over his head. Jowett claimed to be the only man who could perform this feat. However, leading strength historians are in agreement that Jowett—who was also famous for his exaggerations—never made such a lift. Even so, the feat is both famous and infamous. Jowett always fascinated me, and approximately 20 years ago Phyllis Jowett, George's daughter, gave his storied anvil to us for what's now known as the Joe and Betty Weider Museum of Physical Culture. Since we had Jowett's own anvil, that's the one we used as an MM challenge. Because strength historians realized that no human being has ever lived who could do what Jowett claimed to have done we chose a more modest—but still very difficult task.

After much deliberation the MM committee decided that the Jowett Anvil should be carried to the side of the body and not between the legs. This year the challenge was to lift the anvil by the horn from the floor and carry it on a rubberized mat along the front edge of

the Expo Stage from one end of the stage to the other, if possible. If an athlete carried the anvil the full length of the stage he was supposed to loop around an orange cone made of heavy rubber and then carry the anvil back toward an identical cone at the beginning point of the event...and so on until the anvil dropped. *Only chalk was allowed for this challenge and for all others, and the hands of all the men were subject to being checked by Bert Sorin or another judge at any time.*

All of the people associated with the contest were humming with excitement as Jowett's Anvil was brought onstage and the hard-handed heavies walked up the stage and into the pages of history. Those of us who really study the past are aware that no evidence exists that Jowett himself had been able to even deadlift the implement with one hand. Even so, his anvil feat has always fascinated people.

To underscore the impossibility of the feat Jowett described, consider that two of the topflight men in Mighty Mitts failed to deadlift the anvil and three others carried it less than six feet. Three men stood out, however—Sergei Romanchuk from the Ukraine, who covered 23'9"; Tex Henderson, who beat him by 10 feet; and the massive Rich Williams, who was credited with 38' 7.5" (because the distance was measured from cone to cone) but who carried the anvil all the way around the cone, at which point he began to actually run, making it part of the way back to the finish line for a total distance of close to 50'. It was a remarkable combination of body power, athleticism and, of course, hand strength. Speaking of hand strength, after the event was over I asked a group of the top finishers in the event what they thought about Jowett's claim of cleaning the anvil by the horn. They all looked at me and then each other and we all began to laugh.

Sorin's Monster

One of the first events that came to mind as I thought about the best ways to test the mitts of the mighty men in our contest was a deadlift featuring a bar with a two-inch diameter. Another of my requirements was that the bar and the weights on each end must be solidly fixed to each other. In other words, we didn't want the bar to turn inside the weights—regardless of the material used to make the weights. A "solid" barbell—like a cast dumbbell—is more difficult to lift than is a barbell loaded with standard barbell plates, unless the plates are secured to the bar or handle in some way.

My original plan was to cut two "rounds" from

the trunk of a huge tree (three feet or more in diameter) so that the bar and the two rounds would have a combined weight of approximately 500 pounds. As Richard and I talked about this—and especially about how heavy we should make the challenge barbell—he said that as far as he knew the heaviest hookless and strapless deadlift ever made on a 2" bar and using a pronated grip was 438 pounds. For this reason, early in our deliberations Richard was reluctant for us to use as much as 500 pounds. However, as we swapped stories about things we had seen done by inhumanoids like Rich Williams and Mark Henry, Richard grew more comfortable with 500.

The advantage of a figure like 500 pounds to people in our situation, who are attempting to stage a strength contest, is that the figure itself is memorable. It's a barrier figure like a four-minute mile or a 400-pound clean and jerk. Most serious fans of track and field know that Roger Bannister was the first man to break the four minute barrier in the mile, just as most serious fans of the iron sports know that the first man to elevate 400 pounds in the clean and jerk was Charles Rigulot. However, only those fans with either a genuine obsession or a truly rare memory would know the name of the man who was the first to break the 3 minute, 51 second barrier or the man who first lifted 443 pounds to arms' length overhead.

Another aspect of "stagecraft" which can make a strength feat much more exciting to an audience—an aspect known to all performers during the glory days of the professional strongman a hundred years ago—is that it's very important for the thing being lifted to not only *be* heavy but to *look* heavy. It's a bit like the famous aphorism regarding judicial rulings, "Not only must justice be done, it must also be *seen* to be done." This consideration prompted me to make plans, described earlier, to use well-aged (and therefore lighter) wood when we built the deadlift challenge barbell for Mighty Mitts. However, because I was so busy with the operations at the Stark Center I didn't have a lot of spare time to scour the countryside in search of a relatively light tree-trunk (Cottonwood or Sycamore, for example, instead of Oak or Hickory) that had been dead for a long time and was therefore lighter. So, after three or four trips down to my ranch and to the larger ranches of several of my friends, I decided to give up my plans for the wooden implement I wanted to call the "Bobo Bell" (note obscure reference).

Salvation appeared in the person of Richard

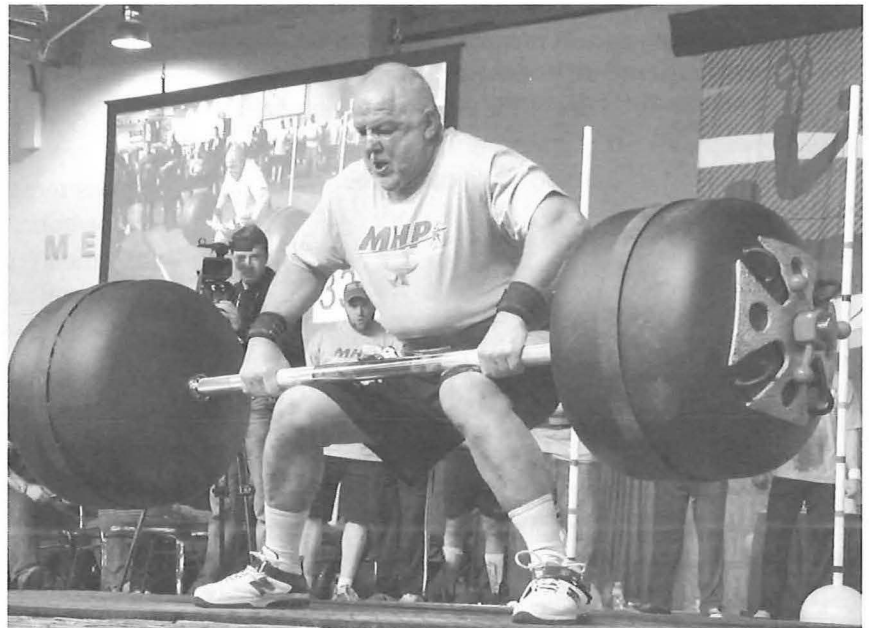
Sorin, founder and owner of the Sorinex Equipment Company and himself one of the legends of hand strength, who offered to design and have built a huge, circus-type barbell weighing exactly 500 pounds, featuring spheres which were to be 25" in diameter and a bar two inches in diameter. The bar he designed does not rotate within, or independent of, the spheres in any way. The challenge in the contest was to deadlift the bar for as many repetitions as possible within 30 seconds using a double-overhand (pronated) grip. Both Sumo and traditional deadlifting styles were permitted and the bell could be "hitched" on the way up as long as the lifter was standing straight at the end of the lift. The barbell had to touch the platform on every rep after the referee had given the "Down" signal, and a "hook grip" was not allowed. (Yes, as hard as it is to believe, some men have hands so large that they can take a "hook grip" on a 2" bar.) After the referee gave the down signal on each rep the lifter was allowed to either drop the bell, re-grip, and try to make another rep or he could lower it after getting the down signal, touch the floor, and pull it right back up again. The most reps, plus the height on the first failed attempt, won and determined placings.

The work of ironmonger's art which resulted not only weighed exactly 500 pounds or, as Richard said, "Five hundred, dead nuts," it was breathtaking—both beautiful and terrible—the largest-looking barbell I've ever seen that was neither a movie prop nor a bell designed for hip or harness lifting. Were it made of solid iron or steel it would weigh well over a thousand pounds. Even now, as it rests in a place of honor at the entrance to the Weider Museum here at the Stark Center, it never fails to catch the interest of the many thousands of people who have seen it since we installed it in April. In a later issue of *Iron Game History*, I plan to describe the hundreds of hours of design, fabrication, and tweaking it took for Richard and his crew to produce this spectacular implement—this monster. Sorin's Monster.

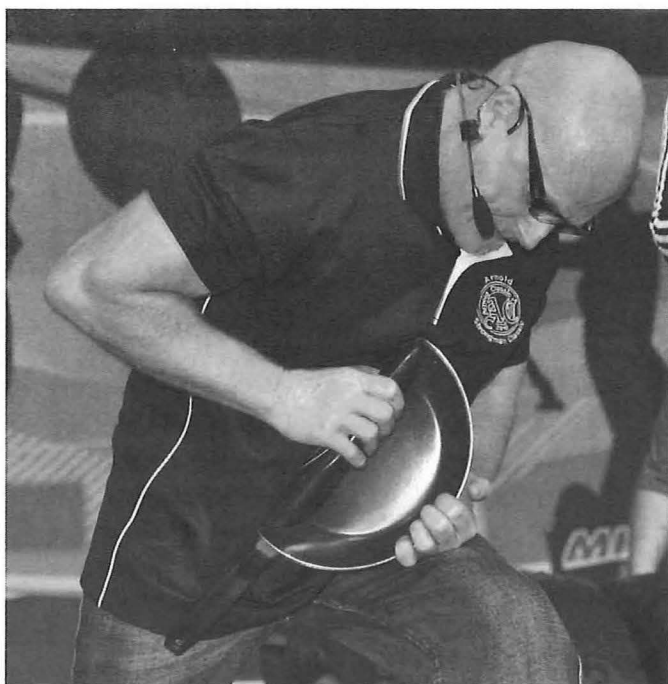
As to the ability of our MM competitors to deal with the ominous bell, four men failed to make a full deadlift, two managed one rep, and one man—the Old Viking, 60 year-old Odd Haugen—brought shouts of amazement and praise from the crowd by completing two suc-

cessful deadlifts. As for the top men, Big Tex Henderson finished third with four full deadlifts and he lost several more as his grip failed before I was able to give the "Down" signal. Finishing second was the huge-handed Mark Felix from England, who was the main reason we specifically forbade the use of a "hook grip" in this lift. Felix is also phenomenal in the deadlift as it's done in the sport's largest and most prestigious organization—the International Powerlifting Federation—and he has an official best lift of 904 pounds. Because of Felix's hand-size, his grip, and his prodigious back strength (His top deadlift was the best of anyone in the Mighty Mitts event.) many people close to the contest thought he would do more reps than anyone else. As it turned out, he got credit for six completed lifts but he lost at least two more because his banana-like fingers failed him before I shouted "Down!" I should also explain that, having realized going in that it would be very difficult for the men to easily hold the Monster at the top of the deadlift, I decided to judge the event myself and to give very quick "down" signals to everyone.

The man who mastered the Monster was, once again, Rich Williams, who put on a show that drove the thousands of people watching wild with amazement as he hauled rep after rep after rep—as if he were lifting a bell made of plastic or balsa wood. Part of the reason for the crowd's excitement was that as Rich moved from rep to rep—some of which weren't official as he let them



The miraculous Odd Haugen, at age 60, held his own. Shown here doing his second rep with Sorin's Monster, which gave him fourth place. Hitching and stopping was allowed.



Perhaps the most widely travelled and publicized professional strongman in the U.S., the legendary Dennis Rogers helped to judge Mighty Mitts and also rocked the house with his phenomenal feats of hand strength, including the rolling up of a standard frying pan.

down so quickly that I was unable to give the “Down” signal in time—he became much more animated and forceful, and as he continued to lift he began to make a noise somewhere between a growl and a roar. To be honest, sitting as close as I was to this gargantuan man while he fought for the win, I actually wanted to move back a bit . . . as if I were standing too close to an open blast furnace. In short, his eight rep performance was absolutely unforgettable, and I join many others in the strength world—especially his competitors in the MM contest!—in the hope that he decides to train on our Strongman events, qualify in some way, and take his rightful place in the Arnold Strongman Classic in 2011.

The Inch Dumbbells

As our plans for the first annual Mighty Mitts competition developed, we realized we could add a certain amount of historical gravity to the occasion by using implements which were connected in some way to famous iron gamers—in much the same way that we honor Louis “Apollon” Uni in the Arnold Strongman Classic by using a close approximation of the barbell he made famous over a hundred years ago and by referring to it not as “Apollon’s Axle” but as “Apollon’s Wheels,” the name used by knowledgeable people in all the years

since. For this reason we used George Jowett’s personal anvil, a barbell dreamed up and executed by Richard Sorin, and a pair of replicas of one of the most famous/infamous dumbbells of all—the Inch Dumbbell. (Actually, even the replicas we used in MM—thanks again to the kindness of Richard Sorin—had historical significance. One replica was used in an exhibition in 2002 at the conclusion of the first Arnold Strongman Classic when Jim Lorimer and Arnold wanted the winner, Mark Henry, and the other Strongmen to entertain the high-dollar crowd in the auditorium as the men picked up their prize-money and, in Mark’s case, the keys to a new Hummer. In the exhibition, the men were asked to pull an Inch replica as high as possible with one hand without touching the bell to the body, and Mark won a thousand dollars in that unofficial contest, too. The other replica in the MM event was the one Mark had used the night back in 2002 in New York City when he became the first man in history to clean an Inch Bell with one hand.)

Named in honor of the English strongman and weightlifter Thomas Inch, the original Inch Dumbbell weighs 172 pounds and has a handle almost 2.5” in diameter and 4” in length. The bell was made approximately 100 years ago, and for many years very few men were able to lift it off the floor. Once replicas of the original implement began to be manufactured, however, a number of men trained until they could deadlift one. A few men have been able to deadlift two Inch Bells and walk a short distance with them, and so the challenge at the Mighty Mitts event was to do exactly that—to deadlift two Inch Bells with the dumbbell handles remaining approximately parallel to the platform throughout the deadlift portion of the feat, and attempt to walk across the front of the 50’ Expo Stage, go around a large, solid marker, then go back the other way without dropping either one, and then repeat the process. The distance for each competitor was marked at the place where the first dumbbell hit the floor. Competitors were not allowed to hold the dumbbells tightly against their waists, thighs, or hips during the attempt.

In this case, since deadlifting one Inch Bell had become fairly commonplace, our committee quickly decided that to ask the men to deadlift a pair of “Inches” from the floor and then carry them as far as possible would be challenging as well as very watchable. (As anyone who gives it a moment’s thought will realize, in a vast hall like the main room in the Arnold Sports Festival—with as many as 10,000 people crowded around

the 50'x50' stage—anything like the closing of a gripper or the bending of a spike would be virtually invisible to most of the audience and, thus, profoundly unsatisfying to them.)

The double-deadlift and carry of two Inches gave the crowd a clear idea of the frightful gripping strength of these ten men, nine of whom deadlifted both replicas, one in each hand, and took at least a few steps. Inch, in comparison, used his 172-pound bell in probably hundreds of his shows during the first half of the 20th century and offered money to anyone who could clear it off the floor a fraction of an inch. He never had to pay. As it happened, our event was dominated by the same three men who had either done well in, or won, each of the first two events. Tex Henderson snatched the bells off the floor of the stage and motored down the rubber mat and around the rubber cone toward the original starting line until the fingers of one hand gave way and one of the bells hit the mat 66' 9.5" down the course. The very powerfully built Mark Felix edged Tex out by about a foot and a half, taking the bells 68' 4.5".

Once again, Rich Williams stepped to the line with fire in his eyes, lifted the bells from the floor as he might lift a pair of lunch pails, and took off toward the first cone. Almost running, he reached the cone, went around it quickly, and then headed back toward another cone, which had been placed on the finish line. Once again he reached the cone, circled it and began to actually run with the bells before they finally fell at 76' 4". It was spectacular to see, and Rich was travelling so fast when the dumbbells dropped from his grasp that he lost his balance to the right, fell forward to that side, did a quick shoulder-roll, and sprang back to his feet. No wonder he earned All-American honors in each of his final three years of college ball.

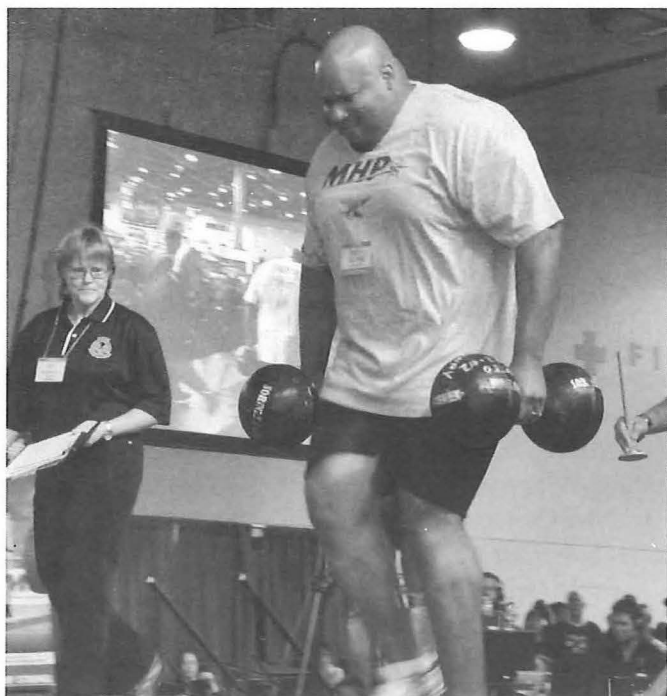
The Mark Henry Bell

This was the one event we believed would have very little audience appeal because we thought no one would be able to lift it. Even so, we thought it was worth doing since—if it proved to be beyond the current ability of any of our athletes—it would remain a possibly achievable goal for future years. The staging of the event wasn't audience-friendly, however, and next year we'll do our best to find a way to keep the Henry Bell as an ongoing challenge while improving the view the audience has of what's happening—or of what's not happening.

As to the origin of this implement, about three or

four years ago, Mark Henry decided to have a thick-handled dumbbell made weighing approximately 250 pounds. However, the machine shop that built Henry's bell made a major miscalculation when they cut the pieces of 9" bar-stock used for the "canister" weights at each end of the short handle. The result was a dumbbell, with a handle 2.5" thick and 6" long, which weighed not 250 pounds but 300 pounds. We called it the "Mistake Bell," and even though Henry himself was unable to lift it, he decided to leave it as it was so that it would remain as a challenge for him and for others. Shortly after the Henry Bell was made, a small but heavy box (50 pounds) was built for it so that it would be easier to carry, and the challenge at the Arnold was to lift the bell all the way out of its box with one hand without tipping the box over. At the end of a successful attempt the Bell would be resting on the platform and the box would be upright. During their attempt to lift the Bell out of the box, the men were not allowed to touch the box with either of their legs or feet in order to "brace" it. If more than one person succeeded, the prize-money would be split. We hoped that one of our Grip Gods would be able to raise the Henry Bell out of its box in 2010, but we doubted that it would happen. I should add that my committee and I were surprised that so many people who posted on the various internet grip sites seemed to think quite a few men would lift it from its box.

As a pure test of grip strength—without considering the spectators—I think it's fair to say that the attempts the competitors made to lift the primitive-looking bell out of its box indicated that although it was too much for them in the 2010 contest it will almost certainly be lifted within the next several years—at least as high as it needs to be lifted to come up and out of the box. I say this because several of the men—who put the heel of their hand against one end of the bell so that it tilted slightly and was therefore more "liftable" because of the increased traction and because the tilting suppresses the tendency of the handle to "roll"—were able to raise one end of the dumbbell an inch or so. What's more, according to Richard Sorin, who had the best view, one man—Andrew Durniat, the lightest man in the event—held it level and actually budged it briefly off the bottom of the box. This has convinced us that it won't be too long before one of these remarkable men—after lots of specific training on a solid bell with a bar diameter of 2.5"—builds the strength to bring the daunting dumbbell well off the ground and perhaps even to deadlift it. The Henry Bell is now a goal, and it reminds us of the



Unquestionably, 6'4", 400-pound Rich Williams had the mightiest mitts of all, winning all three events. The top photo shows him carrying a pair of Inch Dumbbell replicas; the second shows him in mid-air after losing his balance when he began to actually run with the 172-pound bells.



famous line from Robert Browning, "Ah, but a man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

Overall, those of us who planned and executed the Mighty Mitts contest were very pleased by how it went. We thought the performances were outstanding, and we were also able to arrange an extra added attraction for the crowd in the person of Dennis Rogers, one of the unquestionable Grandmasters of Grip. Not only did Dennis help us to officiate the four MM events—along with his good pal and grip legend Pat Povalitis—but in

between the last Strongman event and the first MM event he put on an amazing demonstration both Friday and Saturday of his ability to tear and bend objects like crescent wrenches and horseshoes. You have to see Rogers in action to believe what he can do, and we all thank him. His presence lent prestige and considerable gravity to the occasion.

But the greatest honor belongs to the pioneers who entered the first annual Mighty Mitts contest. They did themselves proud by answering the challenge and, in so doing, helping us to highlight this emerging sub-culture of the iron game—to bring it out of bars and garages and into the full light of public sports performance. Hand strength has always stoked the imagination of iron gamers and been emblematic of overall strength and vigor. To wit:

Under the spreading chestnut tree the village
smithy stands,
The smith, a mighty man is he, with large
and sinewy hands.

This year, we used Mighty Mitts to "bookend" the events in the Arnold Strongman Classic, but next year we intend to stage MM as a stand-alone competition. We believe its time has come, as witnessed by the internet sites which reportedly have up to 50,000 members and, in the weeks just before and after the Mighty Mitts event, had up to 10,000 posts a week. Naturally, we're grateful to our primary sponsors, MHP and Epicentr, to Jim Lorimer and Governor Schwarzenegger for backing the idea, and to the wonderful crews led by Bert Sorin and Steve Slater, who made everything run so smoothly.

Jim Lorimer refers to the Arnold Sports Festival as "Strength Heaven," and the introduction of the unprecedented grip challenges unveiled in the first Mighty Mitts contest has added a new attraction to the colossal Arnold Sports Festival—an attraction which should stimulate strong men everywhere to push back the boundaries of hand strength.

Editors' Note: All four of the implements used in the 2010 Mighty Mitts have been brought to the Joe and Betty Weider Museum in the H.J. Lutchter Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports at The University of Texas at Austin. By prior agreement with either Drs Terry or Jan Todd, attempts to break records under official circumstances may be made in Austin.