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GEORGE JOWETT, OTTLEY COULTER, DAVID WILLOUGHBY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN WEIGHTLIFTING, 1911-1924

I do not hesitate to say that the beginning was a very hard struggle, and that there were times when the outlook was dark, owing to the antagonism and disinterest evinced from certain quarters where such conditions should never have arisen.

The present success is all due to the fact that my brother officials in the cause stuck to their guns and never quit, and I hope that our many members will never forget their efforts and the way that they helped myself make this organization what it is now, a power for good.¹

—George F. Jowett, 1925

In the early 1920s a new era was dawning in American athletics. “Free from Europe’s struggle to recover from the effects of war,” writes a leading sport historian, “Americans enjoyed a golden age of sport.”² Although those observations apply chiefly to such major spectator sports as baseball and football, weightlifting was undergoing a metamorphosis from the strongmanism of an earlier era to a more regulated and respectable status. At least since the turn of the century, American strongmen, imitating their old world counterparts, flaunted their might and muscle, often with considerable artifice, before unsuspecting audiences at circuses, sideshows, vaudeville performances, and other public displays. There were also some amateur weightlifting contests and—since the days when Richard Kyle Fox’s *Police Gazette* made offers of medals, trophies, money, and a diamond-studded belt—frequent challenges between professionals. Ultimately at stake was the coveted title of “World’s Strongest Man.” But there was no reliable means to verify performances of American strength athletes, many of whom avoided actual competition and made exaggerated claims in order to promote the sale of physical development courses. What was needed was an organization that would systematize lifts and records, provide a more honest competitive environment, and enhance the credibility of the sport. David Webster, in *The Iron Game*, traces the formation of the American Continental Weight-Lifters Association (ACWLA) in the early 1920s by highlighting the contributions of George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, and David Willoughby.³ More detailed information, largely from the Jowett-Coulter correspondence in the Todd-McLean Collection, reveals the many trials and tribulations they experienced in transforming weightlifting from a spectacle into a sport.

For decades prior to their collaboration there were countless appeals from aspiring champions for national competitive stan-

dards. That other amateur sports, especially track and field (and weightlifting in most European countries), were affiliated to an official regulatory body heightened such expectations. It was only natural that these hopes should converge on Philadelphia where Alan Calvert had founded the Milo Barbell Company in 1902. He disseminated information for barbell trainees first by means of a modest pocket-sized guide and then through *Strength* magazine, founded in 1914, which ultimately exercised the greatest influence on the development of an early iron game culture.⁴ In 1911 Calvert published a book, entitled *The Truth About Weightlifting*, which recommended a standardization of procedures. He attributed weightlifting’s lack of popularity to

the very foolish and short-sighted attitude of the professional lifters in this country. These professionals have made a practice of deceiving and ‘buncoing’ the public for so long a time, that the public has become disgusted with their methods and has come to the conclusion, either that all weight lifters are fakirs, or else that weight-lifting is a peculiar kind of sport in which only a few men can excel.

Probably you have noticed that every professional weight-lifter in America eagerly and earnestly proclaims himself to be ‘the strongest man in the World.’ They seem to have the idea that nobody will pay to see them perform unless they make this claim. Sometimes they qualify it by modestly stating that they are the strongest man in the world of their weight. Practically every one of these professionals claims to hold all the world’s records. They know that the general public is not accurately informed as to the records and they take advantage of the fact by making all sorts of ridiculous statements regarding their own lifts.

To remedy this outrage perpetrated by money grubbers, Calvert recommended the certification of officials, the use of tested scales, lifts performed in the European manner, and the establishment of weight classes. Most importantly, he called for an American Board of Control to administer the sport permanently. Calvert was adamant that it be “a board of amateurs, and no professional lifter should have a voice in selecting or interpreting a rule regarding lifting.” Recognizing that there were few men sufficiently competent to serve in this capacity, he suggested that they look to the large urban centers—New York, Chicago, and St. Louis—where hundreds of newly arrived Germans, Austrians, and Frenchmen, “fully conver-



sant with the European system of lifting,” could “form a nucleus around which to build a national association.”⁵ But Calvert’s idealistic

appeal elicited no widespread response.

After 1914 there existed at least a possible mouthpiece upon which a national organization could be based. Yet for several years *Strength* was limited chiefly to articles on basic strength training and muscle moulding, accompanied by inspiring photos of the leading practitioners of the day. Then in the January 1917 issue Ottley Coulter, drawing on his experience as a circus and stage performer, published an important article on “Honesty in Weight Lifting and the Necessity of Making Lifters Prove Their Claims.” The Parkman, Ohio, native pointed out that those sports which had fallen under the aegis of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) since its founding in 1888 were properly regulated and thrived from “a greater *real* rivalry. There can be no *real* rivalry without a basis of equality.” Like Calvert, he rebuked the claims of many professional strongmen whose “reputation for strength” was “more apparent than real.” “The difficulty of gaining reliable information on strength feats during the strongman era,” he later recalled, “was one of the reasons I wrote the first plea for regulation of weightlifting. However my interest was not entirely altruistic at that time. I believed that I could lift more pounds at a time than any man of my weight living at that time.” Unfortunately, by the time “a lifting society with official status was finally organized, I had long left the heavy poundage lifting for hand to hand.”⁶ What Coulter envied most was the regulated lifting enforced by associations in Britain, France, Germany and Austria where “every city has its lifting club, the same as every college in this country has its track team, and the lifting rules are the same in each club.” To attain international standing for American lifters, he hoped that Calvert who possessed “a greater knowledge of lifting than any man in this country,” would “take the initiative” in forming a lifters’ association. Although Calvert heartily endorsed Coulter’s views, the Great War intervened, and the non-appearance of *Strength* for about two years effectively stymied whatever momentum Coulter’s appeal had induced for organization.⁷

By 1920 *Strength* was back in business, and Calvert declared his intention, in light of the many letters he had received, to publish a list of records governing the various styles, classifications, and conditions of lifts that could be performed.⁸ Such a compilation required painstaking care and accuracy as well as access to the most current information. Calvert, with the demands of his business, did not have sufficient time, so he delegated the task to Coulter, who was already supplying information for the magazine from his vast collection of domestic and foreign physical culture publications. Most importantly, Coulter was an avid correspondent, and in light of the relative absence of published information on lifting occa-

sioned by the war, he remained in touch with Professor Edmond Desbonnet in France and with Theodor Siebert and Albert Stolz, the two most reliable sources on German records. “Up all night writing ‘Records for Strength’” is Coulter’s diary entry for October 1, 1920.⁹ In the November issue was a full disclosure of European records in 46 different lifts and their American counterparts, so far as could be discerned. What hampered any definitive compilation, however, was the lack of any authoritative body in the United States that could verify lifters’ claims. With the AAU preoccupied with track and field, Coulter advocated a separate organization for weightlifting. He received full support from *Strength* editor J. C. Egan, who believed that an association would settle the strongman controversies that plagued the sport. The chief dispute then raging was over Warren Lincoln Travis’ \$10,000 challenge to anyone to defeat him in a ten lift event. No agreement seemed possible over what lifts should be included and how they were to be performed. With greater regulation, Egan argued, “the real champion would obtain full credit for his lifts, and we would have real honesty in weight lifting, a thing that is absolutely impossible under present circumstances.

A response to Coulter’s appeal was immediately forthcoming from George Fiusdale Jowett, a native of Bradford, England, who had migrated to eastern Canada during the war. Jowett expressed “great interest” in forming a lifters’ association, explaining to Coulter that he had been appointed by Stanley Gullick of the British Amateur Weight-Lifters Association (BAWLA) to form a Canadian affiliate,

but with the head body being so far away, & the prolonged wait for letters & replies going & coming, nothing could be accomplished.

There is a lifters Assoc. here, called the Barbell & dumbbell lifters Federation, their headquarters are in Montreal, but the trouble is, no one but Frenchmen are wanted.

Jowett suggested that it would be much better to form an organization “for the whole American continent. We are in touch easier with each other & are more alike, & the conditions are more understood amongst us who live on the same continent than elsewhere.” Already he was aware of some lifts exceeding those on Coulter’s list, but there was no means of verification without an association. “Now you can bank on me doing all in my power to help you,” he assured his American counterpart, “& let us get at it & make a darned good success out of it. I lift & wrestle, & always was, & hope to be, a great enthusiast for the iron.”¹¹ Jowett’s enthusiasm for sport for its own sake seemed a welcome change from other men of muscle whose primary motive was self interest. In an April 1921 article he deemed “the prospects for the establishment of an amateur weightlifting association” to be “particularly bright.” He believed North American lifters should look to England for inspiration where BAWLA, under the guidance of Thomas Inch and W. A. Pullum, had made “tremen-

dous strides.” Jowett sought to educate his new comrades on English techniques.¹² Clearly the English amateur tradition served as a model for American organizational initiatives.

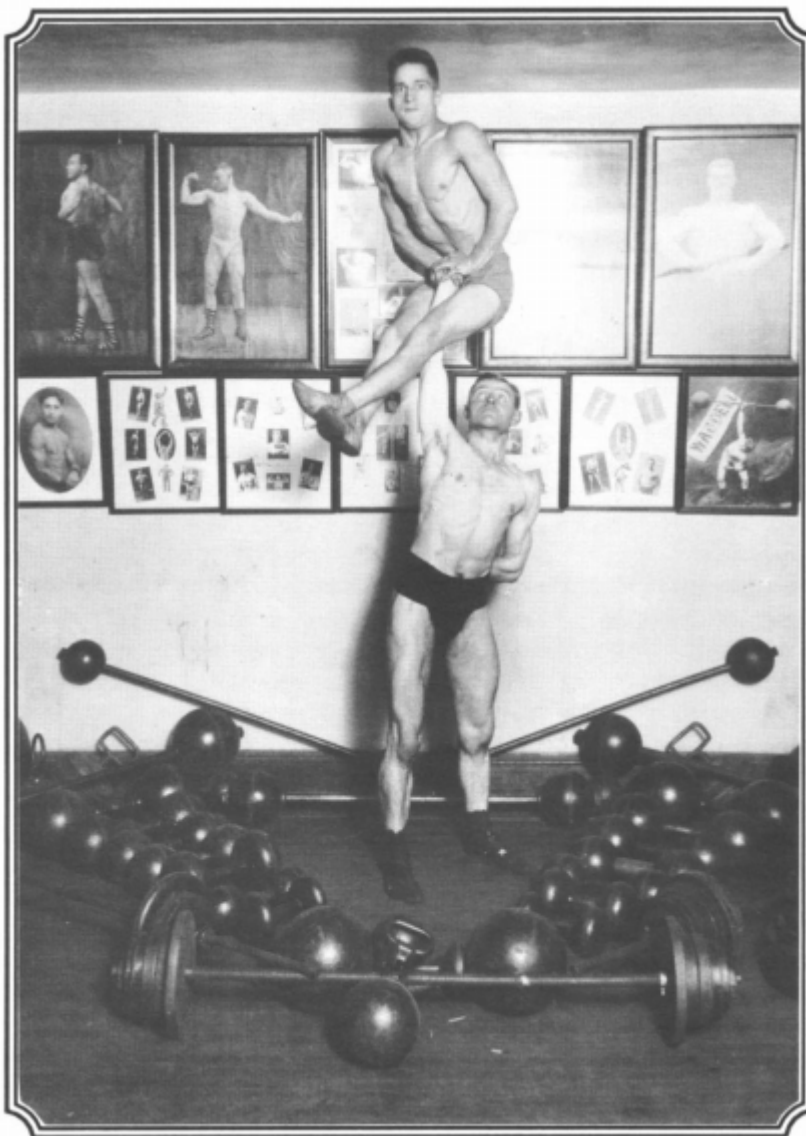
During the next year the concept of a regulatory body gained a further English additive when Bernard Bernard, formerly editor of *Health & Strength* and president of BAWLA, assumed the editorship of a new journal called *Health and Life* in Chicago. He quickly seized on Jowett’s idea, and the two of them laid the foundations for the “American Continental Weight-Lifters Association,” the guidelines for which were promulgated in the July 1922 issue of Bernard’s journal. There would be 49 competitive lifts, provisions for certification of referees and records, and a means for lifters to attain state, national, continental, and world titles. Bernard assumed the posts of president and treasurer, with Arthur Gay of Rochester as vice president and Jowett as secretary and technical adviser. Yearly membership was set at \$3.00.¹³ Jowett explained to Coulter that the ACWLA was

patterned after the BAWLA for this reason. They are a powerful body & were the means of getting lifting included in the Olympic Games, & besides the European lifters endorse the rule, & it would be no use us making a set of rules contradictory to

theirs, for we would not know how we would stand on our merits when comparing records on same lifts. The B.W.L.A. adopts the same rules also, & our work is to control both the amateur & prof: branches.

Though Bernard was the official head of the new organization, Jowett was viewed as its driving force—a man of action. “Talking does not get anything anywhere,” he told Coulter. “It is the initiative that counts, & we have got it.” Jowett intended to tour the continent, with Bernard in tow, to promote the association by holding competitions, passing records, recruiting members, and demonstrating the latest in “scientific” lifting methods. He asked Coulter, then living in Pittsburgh, to serve as state organizer for Pennsylvania.¹⁴ The latter could hardly restrain his enthusiasm, assuring Jowett and Bernard that he would do his “utmost” for the cause. “You really do not know how much of a weightlifting enthusiast I am. I am enthusiastic for the cause of weight lifting aside from any personal ambitions.”¹⁵ *Health and Life* underscored these optimistic sentiments. “Never before in the history of the game has there been so much promise of a mighty boom.”¹⁶

Such apparent naivete all around, however, was not totally untempered by practical considerations. Coulter, realizing that publicity was critical to success and that *Health and Life* was a new and untested medium, expressed



Ottley Coulter holds aloft his handbalancing partner Charles Shaffer in a photograph taken at H. B. Barzen’s gymnasium in Pittsburgh in the early 1920s.

Photo: Todd-McLean Collection



concern about how *Strength* and *Physical Culture* magazines stood with regard to the ACWLA. The former he considered to have “the

largest following of people interested in weight lifting in this country.” Since *Health and Life* was the official organ of the association, he suggested that it might be a good idea to select Milo Barbell pupils as state organizers whenever possible. “It may serve as a ‘whip’ to bring the rest into line.”¹⁷ Jowett, admitting that Calvert and Egan had the potential to do “so much good & so much harm,” took immediate steps to establish a dialogue with them. It was also obvious that he was having second thoughts about their affiliation with Bernard. Jowett was not impressed with his inaugural article on the association and even raised to Coulter the possibility that “if he falls down on his job, we want to hang together so that in future we can be organized by ourselves.”¹⁸ Coulter was displeased with erroneous statements in the September issue of *Health and Life* that he, not Warren Lincoln Travis, had won the Police Gazette Tourney in 1918 and that he was ACWLA organizer for Philadelphia.¹⁹ “We have had a lot of trouble lately,” Jowett admitted in October, but much of it appeared to be in spite of Bernard’s handling of their affairs rather than because of it. A reorganization following the absconding by the managing editor, Percy Clark, with the magazine’s funds held out some hope that Bernard would be able to make a more effective pitch for the association.²⁰

In the meantime chaos reigned as endless challenges and counter-challenges were exchanged between leading lights of the iron game—Arthur Gay, Robert Snyder, Warren Travis, Oscar Marineau, Arthur Giroux, George Weber, Antone Matysek, and even Coulter and Jowett—each jockeying for the most favorable conditions on which to stake a claim as the world’s strongest man. And attempts to take credit for lifts that could not be verified continued unabated. “You will be surprised,” Jowett told Coulter, “to see the offers I have had from some professionals who want to make some fake records for notoriety’s sake, in order to gain publicity, & advertisement, but nothing doing on my part. Let them earn it.”²¹ More than ever, a regulatory body seemed necessary. “Oh! for such an organization on this continent,” he exclaimed in *Strength*, “then an interest would be taken in lifting, we would know how we stood with other lifters and know real lifters from fakes.”²² Still Jowett, despite protestations to the contrary, was mostly talk, and the association, with only the meager resources of *Health and Life* at its disposal, made little headway.

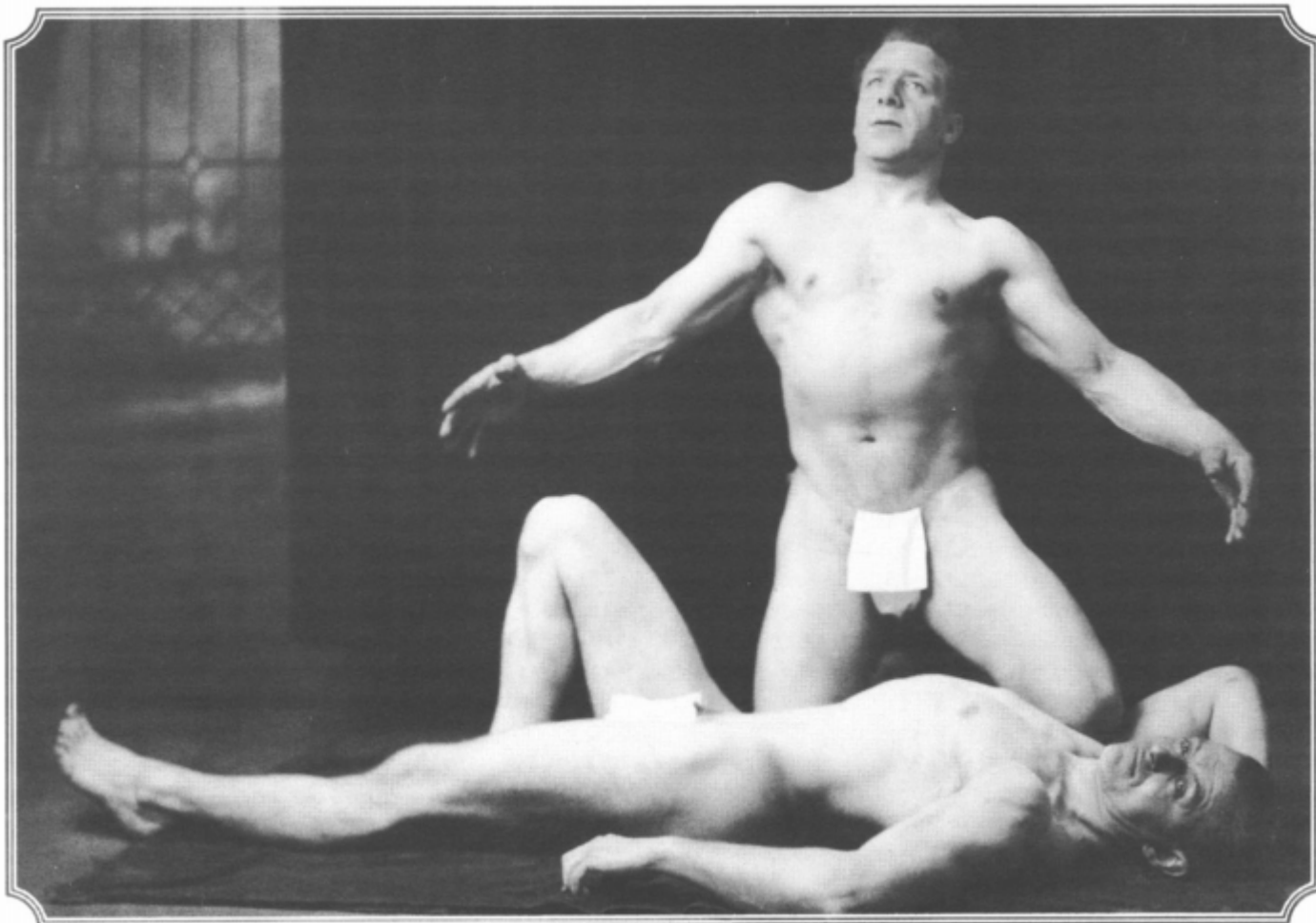
In the fall of 1922 interest centered chiefly on an exhibition that was to be staged at New York’s Madison Square Garden by Bernard Macfadden, the acknowledged giant in the physical culture field. How little influence the ACWLA wielded in the iron game became quickly evident. Coulter asked Jowett whether their fledg-

ing organization was going to participate actively in the strongman contest.

Will the lifts conform to our rulings? If not do you think it would be setting a bad precedent for ACWLA members to enter that contest? I understand the object is for settling the question of who is the strongest man in America. I think that the methods for determining the strongest man . . . might not be the best for promoting weight lifting as a sport. Phy. Cult, I believe, has most influence among the general physical culture public than any other mag. and no doubt whoever wins this Contest will gain considerable prestige. If the contest is not under association rules I do not see how the association could recognize the winner, although he undoubtedly will be recognized as such by the general PC public and they would belittle the ACWLA Champion if it did not lead to a controversy between PC and the association . . . Is it possible for the association to negotiate with P.C. and request to formulate the rules? . . . I think best to avoid any opposition from P.C. or Strength else we might receive no recognition except from ourselves and the European associations.

Jowett acknowledged that his friend had “touched a delicate subject.” Although Macfadden’s organizers knew “little or nothing of lifting” and he had offered to judge and demonstrate proper technique, “the P.C. promotion would not consent to it.” Yet he still intended to go as a spectator and to exercise all possible diplomacy. “I believe in taking all the experience possible,” he rationalized, “& anyway it helps the game as it creates interest, & shows that we have no antagonistic views.” He intended to talk with Macfadden about some future cooperation whereby the New York winner would defend his title against the ACWLA champion at a projected meet in Chicago the following year.²⁴ That neither of the large circulation physical culture magazines supported or publicized the ACWLA was an organizational flaw, perpetrated by Jowett in his early enthusiasm for a convenient sponsor.

Now he sought to remedy it. At Macfadden’s show in late October, Jowett and Coulter met each other for the first time. In a week their friendship deepened as they shared some “laughs and thrills” at New York’s night spots, recruited members for the ACWLA, and established connections in the iron game. Both were dismayed that Antone Matysek had won a belt and the title of “World’s Strongest Man,” with disappointingly low lifts, against almost no competition, and in the absence of ACWLA regulations, thereby stirring up an even greater hornets’ nest of controversy.²⁵ With the need to promote their cause in the mainstream of the lifting community more obvious than ever, Jowett decided to stage an approach to *Strength*. He asked Coulter to write to its publisher, D. G. Redmond, “& speak a good word for me & ask to see more of my works, & state that you



This unusual photograph of George Jowett and Ottley Coulter was taken for possible inclusion in *The Apollo Course* shortly after Jowett's arrival in Pittsburgh. It was common in the early days of physique photography to attempt to strike classical poses rather than to simply exhibit the muscles. In this attempt to mimic statuary, the difference between Jowett's and Coulter's bodies is dramatically evident.

Photo: Todd-McLean Collection

hope to see us co-operate, as you are convinced of my integrity."²⁶ After Coulter obliged, Jowett explained that he was "working slowly to get Calvert's co-operation" with the ACWLA "& the one big reason I desired you to send that letter was to keep the fact before their eyes, of my ability to help the game, & by making them desire to have more of me." To this end Jowett proposed, as he had done earlier with Bernard, "to run a 'Strength' campaign, holding demonstrations & exhibitions in every city, & boost physical culture, & getting in touch with all lifters, & other athletes. . . & have them all exhibit, & thus build up 'Strength' & the game." While Calvert lectured, Jowett would "lift, balance, and wrestle," and thus make the tour pay for itself. *Health & Strength* in England and *Physical Culture* in America had engaged in similar successful promotions. *Health & Life* had expressed "a wish to do the same . . . but unless they handle things better I would not dream of going." What Jowett desired more than anything, he confided to Coulter, was to "bring 'Strength' into the game to help us." He wanted Calvert to

issue diplomas for merit in strength feats, providing that they are performed according to official standards. With

the fee of 50 cents to accompany each application for record. This will give our members more pep, & get hold of all the Milo pupils, & will make them eligible to send them to the [Olympic] Games . . . We will then gradually draw Calvert in, & make him a president of the assoc. That is my outline & fundamental ideas of soliciting Strength into my programme . . . Oh, Lord, Ottley, if we could only get going. . . . What we want now is publicity, & we must boost each other. Always be before the public eye."²⁷

By no means clear in these propositions, perhaps not even to Jowett himself, was the extent to which his personal ambitions went beyond those he professed for the sport.

Unfortunately Calvert had no intention of being drawn in by any grandiose plans for a lifters' organization. "To be perfectly frank with you if there is one thing I dread, it is to start up a lifting association," he told Jowett, "for I know it means an incredible amount of work and yet I am getting letters all the time from people urging me to take this step." As for Jowett's proposal of a lecture tour he was equally adamant. "I do not say that the idea is a bad one," he



stated “but personally there is nothing that would induce me to go around making speeches or delivering lectures on lifting or on any other

subject. I am at my very unhappiest when I am facing an audience.” The only portion of Jowett’s scheme that Calvert found attractive was his idea of collaborating on a booklet for the physical culture public. Struck by Jowett’s claim of the popularity of weightlifting in Quebec, he was willing to produce a 48 page booklet in French, half of which would be pictures of prominent strongmen with the remainder devoted to an explanation of barbell use.²⁸ Such booklets had originated prior to the mail order era of the twenties as a means of purveying physical culture knowledge and, of course, turning a profit.

Stung by this rebuff and increasingly aware of the need for a more substantial commercial base, Jowett and Coulter began to advance their own plans for financial independence. “One contemplating a mail order business always should have the future in view,” Coulter advised. “That is the reason that my writings in ‘Strength’ were general rather than definite as I realized that it would be difficult to sell something that had already been given away.” He sought to imitate Earle Liederman, the most successful “muscle peddler” of this era who started as “practically unknown. . . He had no pupils to advertise . . . and started with a little ad and a small booklet with a few pictures of himself in it.”²⁹ Jowett was equally enthusiastic about their capitalizing on a how-to-do-it booklet and again raised the notion of a cross-country tour, as he had done with Bernard and Calvert. “We both are showmen,” he reminded Coulter. “Why cannot we work up an act, & work at fairs for free performances before the grandstands etc. & also make a deal with them to cover a concession . . . & [I] will demonstrate, or you can, & I lecture, & then sell our booklets, & photos, & also magazines.” With the addition of mail orders that would be forwarded to them, Jowett was confident that they would be able to “do big business.”³⁰ The principal effect of these designs to get rich quick, however, was to distract them from any constructive endeavors relating to the association.

This lack of progress made it exceedingly difficult for *Health and Life* to report and promote the activities of the ACWLA. There were none. But Coulter and Jowett attributed this failure to Bernard rather than themselves. The former surmised that Bernard was simply too busy trying to get the magazine “on its feet” and that the success for the association was not his foremost concern. “Judging from the unsold copies at news dealers here, I think it is doubtful if it is making expenses. You know it takes time to build up a new magazine.” Knowing how vital a monthly organ was to their organization, Coulter intended to write a “diplomatic” letter to stimulate Bernard into action.³¹ Jowett, however, was less delicate. “I have a lot of trouble with Bernard. He never answers my letters re mem-

bership blanks or record certificates, & he has all the money,” he told Coulter.

It seems to me he is only using the asso for the subs he gets out of it, & does not give a damn for the rest. I told him straight in my last letter that he had hurt the asso bad, & that members were feeling sore about it. I lied, but I believe I am justified & I am confessing only to you as I know you will believe my motive, & keep it quiet. I told him members were asking if it was only a money grab, & would be wanting their money back, & what was I to do if they did, as he had it. . . . I told him I could not be writing letters the way I am, as I have no time for anything else, but answer queries about the asso, & H & L, & where the money was. . . . I told him I could not be telling them all the time he was rushed with work & could not get the certificates off the press. . . . He will have to do something, or else I will have a proposition to put up to you members.

Jowett also professed special insight into Bernard’s English temperament which seemed to explain his inability to adapt to the more market-oriented conditions in America. “His British ideas are alright in Britain, but no good here.” Success in the United States, Jowett believed, required a greater sensitivity to commercial considerations. “I was hoping that we would have grown big, & we would have had all the names of our members in our own hands & could have canvassed them direct with anything we had to sell. As it is he is hurting his mag: & us also.”³² It seems never to have occurred to Jowett that his organization’s affiliation with *Health and Life* could be perceived in an exact opposite way by Bernard; that far from yielding any tangible benefits, it was proving to be a liability to the magazine. What’s more, it could readily be seen that it was only by dint of Bernard’s largess that the ACWLA had experienced even a modest measure of success.

Thus Jowett’s bluff and bluster tactics elicited an immediate reaction from Bernard who was more than willing to withdraw from his original commitment. Though agreeing to continue giving publicity to the ACWLA, in early 1923 he severed all business connections with it and returned all records and cash. Only ten members had enrolled since the previous fall. Jowett was “bitterly disappointed to see how small the list is, after all the work I have done.” He was even “wondering if it was worth while to go on with it,” but on reconsidering their predicament, he decided they had still not taken full advantage of their appeal to *Strength* and that he would like to see the association “last a little longer,” at least for them to be able to set some records and receive some “official recognition and prestige.”³³

But any affiliation with *Strength* was not a realistic possibility at this time, and the ACWLA organizers were forced to fall

back on their own meager resources-consisting of little more than the strength of their personal friendship. So Jowett appointed his friend to be the new secretary-treasurer and expressed the hope that they could survive on the sale of record certificates.³⁴ Coulter graciously accepted the position and reflected on their lonely plight. He had initially favored affiliating with *Strength*, but he did “not think they are interested in sport for sport’s sake but only for its money making value to them.”

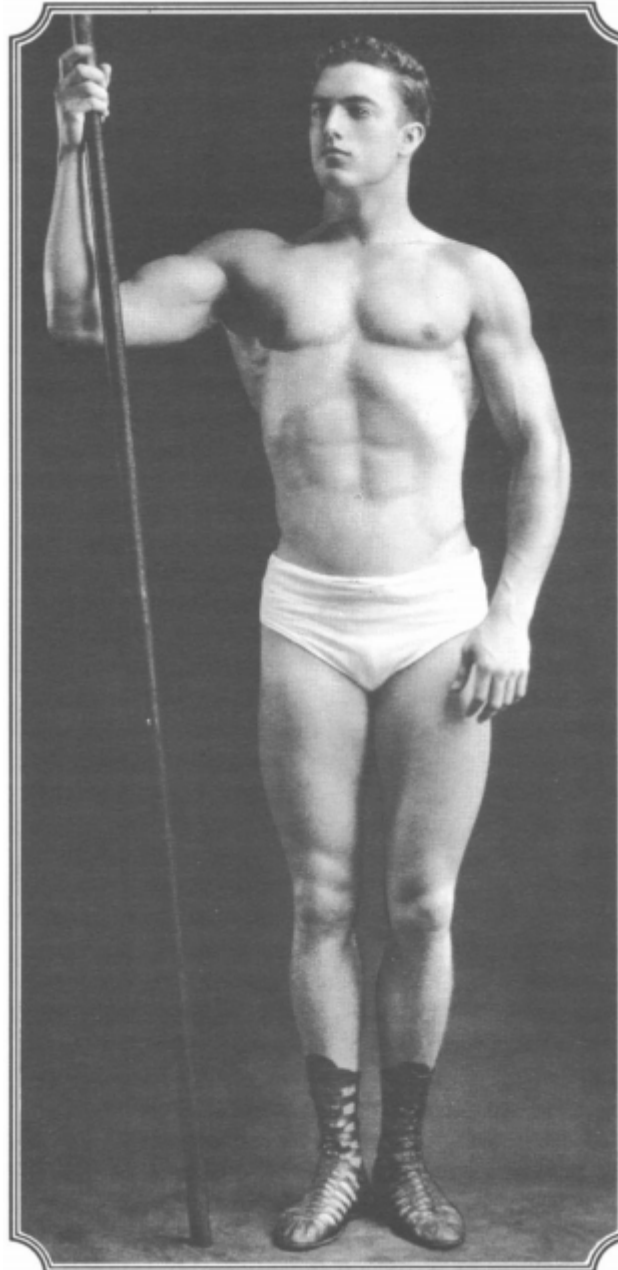
They are business men and the mag is run for business reasons. If the organization did not increase their circulation or give their pupils publicity it would not benefit them. . . Many they advertised were considerably overrated. About all the proof they required from a pupil was a testimonial letter. They all do this it is a matter of business but men who have an exaggerated reputation do not desire to have it destroyed or lessened by a lifters association. I know many Milo pupils who are considerably overrated. . . In other words the organization appears to benefit only the real honest to goodness lifters who really can lift and are modest enough to publicly admit that they cannot lift [sic] only what the scales and correct rules show. Now an organization affording proper competition would increase the standard of the lifts in course of time and naturally the standard of the competitors so that the average standard of all competitors would gradually increase. The indi-

vidual members seems too selfish for the proper working of this plan.

At least Bernard, he reckoned, had given the association a “definite try which is more than ‘Strength’ did.” In the meantime, Coulter recognized that the ACWLA “must be kept going by us personally, if necessary, as our time for action is getting less each year.”³⁵

Jowett concurred with the assessment by Coulter of Calvert’s business proclivities and his explanation of why so few lifters were attracted to their movement. On a more philosophical level, Jowett could view their plight in light of the age-old conflict between idealism and the power wielded by vested interests.

Before the assoc. was ever founded I knew we would be up against this proposition, believe me, I have had so much to do with lifting organizations that I did not go into this with eyes shut. It is what I expected, & got. But I stood for the game & its honesty, & the growing lifters, who would be free from this contamination, & relied upon their enthusiasm to build us up, & knew this was necessarily slow work, but Ottley some one must pioneer, & give the sacrifice of time & other denials, so I blazed the trail, & you & I & others, but I am afraid we can only say, you Willoughby & I, can be always termed the trail blazers of lifting organization in America, even if we do fail, the seed



David P. Willoughby at the age of 25 in 1926. Willoughby weighed 185 pounds in this photograph at a height of 6'1 1/2'.

Photo: Todd-McLean Collection



is sown, others will spring up, & we will have done our part.

He thought *Strength*, despite its mercenary ways, would at least publish ACWLA records in its club news section.³⁶ A glimmer of hope was also evident in the activities of some of their state representatives, most notably David Willoughby of Los Angeles who had attracted Jowett's attention as "a good organizer."³⁷ Indeed Willoughby had achieved national visibility from a series of articles he authored for *Health and Life* on "Strong Men of the Far West." In stark contrast to the inactivity of eastern groups, a heading in the May 1923 issue featured "Plenty of Weightlifting Action in California."³⁸

Throughout 1923 Jowett and Coulter, forced to come to terms with the real world, pursued two almost paradoxical courses. First, in accordance with their condemnation of leading strongmen and the need to adhere to national and world standards, was their emphasis on honesty in lifting. Jowett wrote in February that he had just returned from a Montreal meet where Arthur Giroux had performed a limit deadlift. While the lifter's friends "tried to make a record of it," Jowett would "not allow it, as it was not so. . . & a row was the result. We had lots of fun over those excitable, gesticulating Frenchmen."³⁹ Reinforcing this strict adherence to standards was Willoughby, who told Coulter in March that "I frequently get myself into 'hot water' by insisting that every detail of a lift be performed in the correct manner. . . in strict accordance with BAWLA Rules; therefore they should be accepted *anywhere*."⁴⁰ And Coulter, suspicious of the ulterior designs behind Arthur Gay's much publicized "Strongest Man" challenge, reminded Gay in April what constituted a real record—a written application to the secretary, the appointment of an official referee and witnesses, and the selection of an inspector of weights who must test the scales, weigh the record, and sign a certificate. Both the lift and the barbell had to conform to ACWLA regulations.⁴¹ But Charles Atlas and Antone Matysek were the most important targets for the proselytizing efforts by Jowett and Coulter. In succeeding months the latter pair continuously expressed indignation that leading strength stars, fearing loss of ill-gotten claims to fame and fortune, refused to subject their lifts to official scrutiny.

The second initiative undertaken by Jowett and Coulter seemed somewhat ironic in light of the altruistic tone of their designs for the ACWLA and their criticisms of *Health and Life* and *Strength* for their preoccupation with money. They became deeply involved in plans for capitalizing on their physical culture knowledge. Virtually no scheme for turning muscles into money—books, pamphlets, courses, circuses and fairs, Coney Island and Atlantic City shows, exhibition tours, chest expanders, etc.—was overlooked. Eventually they settled on a mail order scheme, and both agreed that for collaboration, as the "Vulcan Brothers," it would be necessary for Jowett

to move to Pittsburgh. If Coulter could find him a job, Jowett reasoned, "we can study together, work up acts, & prepare our way for the course. The course is the big thing to look to."⁴² Coulter too was convinced that only by such means would they be able to build their personal fortunes and those of the ACWLA. "What we need most now is cash. Really I don't think you know how badly we (I especially) need it. My finances are at ebb tide." Coulter worked for a collection agency at \$22 per week. "At present my expenses are a little heavier than usual and it takes about all I make to pay expenses." Nevertheless he was prepared to offer his friend, even with the birth of a son in January, free food and lodging in his home until he got established.⁴³ Jowett agreed with Coulter's view. "It is money we want, & lots of it, & we will do our best to get it on the level, I am out for it, as I am not satisfied with a bare living." An indication of Jowett's priorities was his comment that "for the benefit of our cause," he wanted the association "to be a success."⁴⁴

By early spring Jowett was in Pittsburgh where Coulter had lined up a position for him at Donahoe's department store. It was arranged through a cheese buyer named H. B. Barzen who was a lifting enthusiast and personal friend of P. J. Donahoe, the president. So interested was Barzen in securing Jowett, Coulter told him that he was willing "to let some one go to make room for you."⁴⁵ Jowett quickly made his presence known. Coulter spoke of how he had "created a great lifting boom since he became a resident amongst us" and *Health and Life* highlighted his new situation with the headline "Jowett Sets Pittsburgh Alight."⁴⁶ But his foremost interest was the establishment, with Coulter and Barzen, of a mail order business called the Apollo System. "A New Era Dawns" was the opening pitch of their first advertisement in *Health and Life*. Despite their erstwhile criticisms of the false and exaggerated claims of other mail order strong men, no effort was spared to portray this system and its authors in the most glowing terms. So, as a result of "the unanimous vote of their controlling board" and supposedly "inspired by requests from thousands of physical culturists," the Apollo System offered "the life-long experience of two of the greatest geniuses of physical knowledge that the world has ever produced." Also featured was a full-body pose of Jowett, alleged to be "the winner of the 'Best Developed Man Contest,' open to the world. . . . He is the greatest athlete in physical prowess the world has ever known."⁴⁷ Subsequent advertisements and articles in leading physical culture journals extolled the virtues of Jowett, even at the expense of the system itself! A lengthy self-serving article entitled "The March of a Great Athlete" no doubt removed for readers every possible doubt about the assertion made in a later ad that he had "won and defended the title of the 'STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD.'"⁴⁸

Such outlandish claims, devoid of any evidence, had the unwelcome side effect of taunting other mail order strongmen. Soon the columns of *Health and Life* were ablaze with charges, challenges, and counter-challenges. "The whole of the iron world seems alive

with challenges,” observed Bernard. “What we want to see now is *action*, and these giants of strength battling together in the same ring for the World’s Strength Supremacy.”⁴⁹ Mainly what emerged however, was more hyperbole, with the expansive Jowett claiming to be “the world’s strongest athlete, the world’s greatest teacher,” and now “the greatest producer of champions.” In the latter capacity he listed the names of the champions he had trained with the Apollo System, including (with his consent!) the name of David Willoughby. For sheer zeal and effrontery, the later promotional techniques of Bob Hoffman and Joe Weider hardly surpassed those of Jowett. As the late Charles A. Smith, who perused the Jowett-Coulter correspondence, once wrote—Jowett was “notorious for drawing the long bow.” What he said was “of little value and not to be relied on. He always told it to the advantage of George Fiusdale. Nothing he claimed was so. No titles. No awards. No nothing.”⁵⁰ Such an indictment seems a bit harsh, but it would be hard to imagine a greater contrast than the huckster image Jowett conveyed to the public, on the one hand, and the strict code of ethics he was attempting to enforce on other strongmen through the ACWLA.

Yet for all of Jowett’s artistry with facts, his commercial venture could not be long sustained. The Apollo System ran aground not because he misrepresented himself and his product. Outlandish claims by mail order courses were commonplace in the 1920s, and there were no governmental regulatory agencies poised to protect the consumer. It foundered, as so many others did, on a lack of response from the public, a failure to recover the money originally invested, and eventually indebtedness. Lacking sufficient wherewithal to launch the venture, Jowett (with Coulter) had tapped the enthusiasm and financial resources of their friend Barren who also agreed to manage and promote the system. When predicted enrollments did not materialize and Barren requested more support from his partners, Jowett accused him of financial speculation. “I was not interested in his debts,” he told Coulter, “as I know what he spent in the System & know that he bor-

rowed money for his own use, & told people it was for the System, & that he also misapplied funds we gave him, that made him indebted to us.”⁵¹ With Barzen unwilling to commit any more of his resources, and with Jowett and Coulter unable to support the venture independently, the partners abandoned it and split up. Coulter moved on to greener pastures by early 1924 to pursue police work in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Jowett, checked in his ambitions in the strength world, remained in Pittsburgh in a state of restlessness. And his attempts to achieve instant fame, while netting no monetary reward, succeeded throughout the following year in mirroring him in controversy over his lifting reputation.⁵²

It is hardly surprising under these circumstances that virtually no progress was made in advancing the cause of the ACWLA. Despite constant publicity and expressions of good intentions in *Health and Life*, there were hardly any additional subscribers, no championships conducted, and only a few records were set, chiefly in Pittsburgh by Coulter’s protégés Charles Schaffer and George Dembinski. What rescued organized weightlifting in the United States was the independent initiative taken by Dave Willoughby in distant California. Like Jowett, he sensed the need for publicity and official standards, but he was far less reckless in promoting his own claims. In 1923 and 1924 *Health and Life* carried regular reports of the achievements of Los Angeles lifters sent by Willoughby. Contrary to the unfulfilled promises of Jowett and Coulter in the east, Willoughby and his confreres were holding real contests and setting real records. The May 1923 issue featured a report of the annual city gymnastic championships at the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC). In the weightlifting event three lifters—Willoughby, A. L. Martin, and Albert Bevan—contested six lifts.

Willoughby easily bested his competitors with a 1069 pound aggregate to their respective totals of 983.5 and 920. The importance of this three person contest, however, was its strict adherence to official standards. The judges, boasted Willoughby, were Noah Young and Mark Jones, both “previous champions of national reputation.



George Jowett prepares to lift Charles Schaffer during a handbalancing session in 1925. Jowett’s unusual thickness is apparent.

Photo: Todd McLean Collection



All lifts were weighed on an accurate scale, which was conspicuous by its absence in former contests,” and the lifts “were all made under the most stringent rules, similar to those of the B.A.W.L.A.”⁵³ The other interesting aspect of this competition is that it was held under the auspices of the Amateur Athletic Union. Although Coulter did not think “that organization understands weightlifting,” Jowett took a pragmatic view.⁵⁴ “Willoughby wrote me that unless we cooperated with the A.A.U. out there we would get no Cal. members, as he said they always promoted the tourneys out there . . . He said that they lifted exactly as the B.A.W.L.A. ruling called for. I answered that under these conditions we accepted them.”⁵⁵ Imagine this modest affair, which has as much right as any other to be called the first weightlifting contest in the United States held under official conditions—was inspired by the ACWLA, sanctioned by the AAU, and conducted under BAWLA rules!

That it was held in one of the most remote and still quite undeveloped regions of the country was greeted with surprise and even dismay. Bernard wished that “reports from other state representatives would be so full of inspiring news,” but he was pleased that weightlifting “is evidently gaining the popularity it deserves as the king of games.”⁵⁶ Coulter expressed concern to Willoughby that his group’s success might be detrimental to the association by discouraging others from setting records. “The poundages that many of you Los Angeles lifters do are so high that many men will be completely without a chance for any glory right at the start.” He feared that “others would have no especial incentive to join the Assn. and right now we need memberships to increase the influence of our Assn.”⁵⁷ Yet it was obvious that, outside the efforts of Willoughby, little was being done to further the ACWLA cause. “I am glad that you are giving the Assn. such hearty co-operation,” Coulter told him in August 1923.

Confidentially the other representatives have accomplished practically nothing so far as the organization is concerned. You and I are about the only rep. that bothered about getting members . . . The organization is functioning though even if membership is small and finances low (This is confidential between you and me—for the good of the cause). As you have real ability, you can gain real everlasting recognition through the Assn as a medium and your efforts will not have been in vain.⁵⁸

Willoughby’s ability as an organizer was further manifested on November 21 when he conducted a contest between Martin and Bevan at the LAAC “under strict A.C.W.L.A. rules.” It was the first time that the best lifts of each lifter were weighed on a tested Fair-

bank scale and compared with British records.⁵⁹ “A big success” is the way Willoughby described it to Coulter, noting that weightlifting was about to experience a “big boom,” there being “hundreds of enthusiasts in L.A. alone.” He then spoke frankly about the moribund state of organized weightlifting elsewhere.

Say, Coulter, how is it that the A.C.W.L.A. is progressing so slowly? I hope that your business does not prevent you (as secretary) from boosting things along. Maybe I am too impatient, but you know, as well as anyone, what enthusiasm is! For example, I am very anxious to see the Asso. issue a list of recognized records on the 49 official lifts . . . in this way, we could at least get the thing started, & the ‘A.C.W.L.A. Record Book’ could be issued in a form that permitted revisions being made, as soon as any lifts were bettered. . . Come on Coulter! lets make this proposition an actuality!

Willoughby also wanted an “up to date list of foreign lifting records” for comparative purposes⁶⁰ Not since Coulter’s list appeared in the 1920 issue of *Strength* had any such records been published. Willoughby was certainly justified in chiding Coulter for negligence. With no meets and no records to its credit, there seemed to be little reason for an association that existed only on paper.

On April 19, 1924, Willoughby infused further life into organized weightlifting by hosting the first National Weight Lifting Championships in Los Angeles. It was also an Olympic tryout in as much as the winners were expected to represent the United States at the Paris games in July. Seven lifters, virtually all from Willoughby’s club, competed in three weight classes, another innovation for American lifting. Interestingly, the performances turned in at the Southern California Championships the following month, where the “Olympic lifts” were defined as the left hand snatch, the right hand clean & jerk, and the two hand military press, were higher than those attained at the national meet. A picture in the September 1924 issue of *Health and Life* featured an impressive array of husky lifters of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, anchored by Willoughby, which vividly underscored their domination of the American weightlifting scene.⁶¹

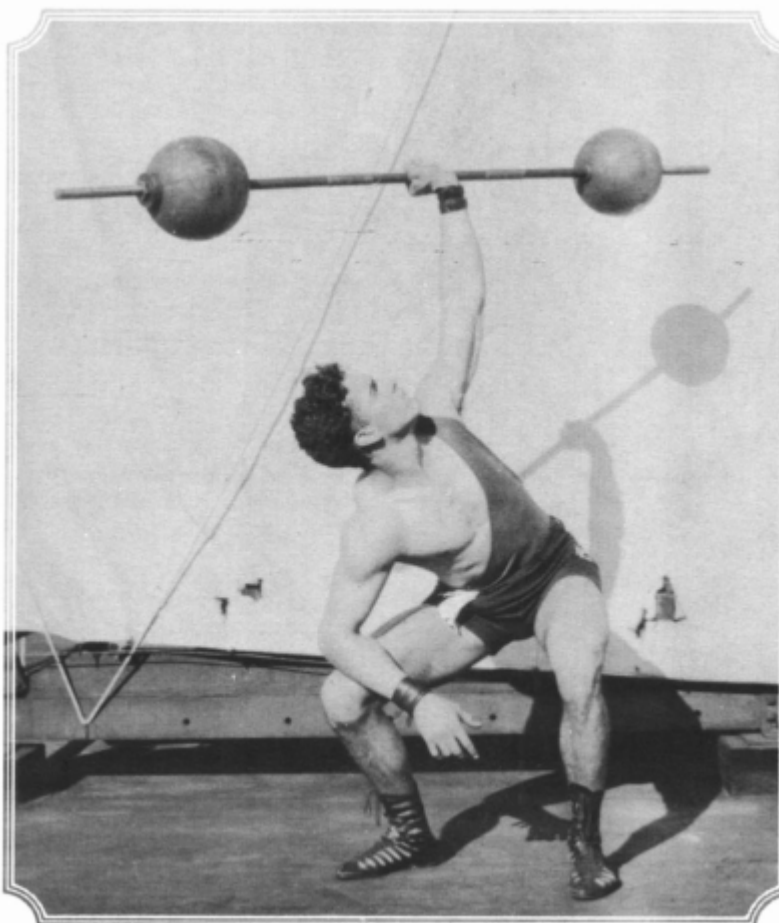
Meanwhile Jowett, always the opportunist, was again seeking to enter the mainstream of the sport by renewing his contacts with *Strength*. He boasted to Coulter that Calvert had offered him as much as \$75 per week but that his employer in Pittsburgh had matched it and pleaded with him to stay. “Calvert is considering about joining the A.C.W.L.A., but said they wanted me there to take care of there [sic] new showrooms where they will give exhibitions as well as sell barbells.”⁶² After several months of negotiations, Jowett finally agreed to join the Milo staff in Philadelphia in September 1924. His employment there, along with physical culturist Charles MacMahon,

coincided with the departure of Carl Easton Williams and changes in editorial policy. A year earlier, as editor, Williams had expanded the size of *Strength* and instituted a more general physical culture format, but it did not bring financial success. Now, under Calvert's influence, there was a greater emphasis on lifting-related content which Jowett's presence was intended to reinforce. Upon departing Pittsburgh, Jowett expressed final regrets over the failure of the Apollo System. "You do not know how I hate to leave Pittsburgh Ott. It is the closing out of all my ideals that you & I struggled for. I may never have showed it Ott, but closing down on that job hurt me & cut me like a knife."⁶³ It seemed a stroke of good luck that Jowett could extricate himself from a losing proposition and assume a post at the center of the iron game where fullest advantage could be taken of the business opportunities in sport.

So far as the association was concerned, Jowett's move had the effect of raising expectations all round. In the first issue of *Strength* after his coming, Calvert authored an article entitled "Enthusiasm Breeds Enthusiasm" which highlighted the accomplishments of Jowett, Coulter, and Willoughby in fostering a national lifting organization. But its underlying theme was Jowett's newfound connection with *Strength* as part of the magazine's increased commitment to lifting. It noted how Jowett, "the most scientific lifter in this country," had "spent all his spare hours in spreading the gospel of lifting" over the previous five years. "His influence has certainly been wide-spread, and his work has been so meritorious and so utterly unselfish, that it took no effort on his part to persuade the publishers of this magazine to lend him their assistance." *Strength*, Calvert reminded readers, "has peculiar advantages in this con-

nection because in its infancy it was entirely devoted to the cause of lifting and still retains among its readers thousands of lifting enthusiasts."⁶⁴ In the same issue there appeared a full page 'rally call' for all lifters to join the American Continental Weight Lifter's Association, now supported by "the strong arm of *Strength*." For a yearly payment of \$7.50, initiates would receive a lapel button, a membership card a year's subscription to *Strength*, and "all the big benefits of this organization." With groups already in place in Pittsburgh and Los Angeles, and others forming in New York and Philadelphia, under Siegmund Klein and Jowett, organizers foresaw fraternal groups springing up in urban centers throughout the country ultimately with as many as 250,000 members!⁶⁵

It remained to be seen whether Jowett's presence at Milo would be a magnet for the other early organizers of American weightlifting. He had held out this possibility to Coulter who, though less driven by purely commercial considerations, was encouraged by the new arrangements. Coulter was "glad that the Milo will take an active part in the A.C.W.L.A. and I think that with their help that it can attain the position that it should." He was also impressed, in light of their failure with the Apollo System, by Jowett's report that Milo was making \$10,000 monthly and as high as \$30,000 in the winter months. "This shows what years of advertising and an established reputation will do. Too bad that we did not get started first in this weight lifting game."⁶⁶ Coulter was well aware of the employment opportunities as an iron game professional at Milo and was no doubt attracted by the possibility of joining his old partner, but he had little of the craving for power and self-aggrandizement that motivated Jowett. Especially with a young family, he had little desire to relinquish



David P. Willoughby demonstrates the one hand snatch in this photo taken in California in 1924. Willoughby is wearing the team uniform adopted by his lifters in Los Angeles.

Photo: Todd-McLean Collection



his steady job as a plain-clothesman in Uniontown to test the less charted waters of the barbell business in Philadelphia.

Whether Willoughby, who had done so much to launch the sport in a practical way, would be drawn to this emerging Mecca was another matter and was probably the reason for his exploratory visit to the East in the late summer of 1924. At the “editorial sanctum of HEALTH and LIFE” in Chicago, he left a firm impression that he was “a real Iron Man.”⁶⁷ In Philadelphia he met with company officials, helped Jowett formulate an ACWLA “set of definitions and rules” based on those of BAWLA, and discussed employment possibilities.⁶⁸ But his idealism and lack of business-mindedness left a bad impression on the leaders of the sport. “He is a good fellow,” Jowett told Coulter

but too much of the idealist, he cannot see the material side or business aspect of us & others at all, & he says it is all a shock He thinks all should fall on his neck with joy to see him & I told him when he told me that it would be a big advantage to the Milo to use him, & that we could not ignore him, that our concern or any other did not have to give a damn for him, as there was too many in the field & we could get along without any one man, we could kill him if we wanted. Believe me, I shocked him to earth. Tho his heart is in the right place & a willing worker, & good man, & he will outgrow his troubles, but he is like so many others, he wants all for nothing, & likes to impress you of how much he knows, & more than others”⁶⁹

As usual, Coulter concurred with Jowett, but it was equally evident to him how valuable persons unsullied by commercial designs were to the sport. “It is well that we have some idealists like him or the association would not have lasted in the early stages.”⁷⁰ Although Jowett and Coulter pioneered the idea of a weightlifting organization, they never forgot the contribution of Willoughby whose deeds were crucial to the realization of their concept.⁷¹

The association of Jowett with *Strength* brought about a firmer financial and publicity base for the ACWLA and was accompanied by a reorganization of its governing board. Virtually all interests were represented, with Jowett as president, Coulter and Willoughby as vice presidents, and an advisory body consisting of Bernard, Calvert, MacMahon, Liederman, Macfadden, Atlas, and Henry Titus. *Health and Life* welcomed these innovations, calling them “a decided step forward. Previously it has been a one-sided affair, Calvert and E. Liederman (who have done so much) being left out, entirely.”⁷² *Strength* was no less sanguine, declaring that its principal aim was to bring all barbell enthusiasts together into “one

big family body.”⁷³ For one of the few times in its century of existence the iron game fraternity appeared to be united, and optimism abounded on all sides that organized weightlifting was at last off the ground.

Energy, idealism, and enthusiasm were all critical factors to the inception of weightlifting in the United States, but it was equally evident that a solid financial footing was necessary to sustain the movement. Jowett and Coulter found themselves caught on a cleft stick, often being forced to sacrifice their early ideas of honesty and integrity to the realities of money, prestige, and power. If not cupidity, commercial considerations at least permeated their organizational approach. Unable to carry forth their ideas for an association independently, they sought support through *Health and Life*, then through the ill-fated Apollo System, and ultimately by resorting to Milo, the company whose life depended on weightlifting. Jowett, Coulter, and Willoughby too, had to reconcile themselves with the irony that the most necessary ingredient to the lasting life of weightlifting as a sport—commercialization—was also the quality that most detracted from its nobility of spirit. It was hardly just a sporting proposition. This marriage of amateur enthusiasm with commercial vision would serve as a model for promotional methods later perfected by others at York and Woodland Hills.

Notes:

I am grateful to Jan and Terry Todd for allowing me to use the Todd-McLean Collection and for their assistance with this article. I would also like to thank David Webster. Unless otherwise noted, all correspondence references cited in this paper are from the Coulter Papers of the Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas.

¹George F. Jowett. *The Rules, Regulations and Records of Weight Lifting* (Philadelphia: 1925), 1.

²William J. Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Totowa, New Jersey: 1982), 215.

³David Webster. *The Iron Game, An Illustrated History of Weight-Lifting* (Irvine, Scotland: 1976), 114-5.

⁴David Webster, *Barbells & Beefcake, An Illustrated History of Bodybuilding* (Irvine, Scotland: 1979), 54.

⁵Alan Calvert, *The Truth About Weight Lifting* (Philadelphia: 1911), 15 & 109.

⁶Coulter is referring here to handbalancing.

⁷Ottley Russell Coulter, “Honesty in Weight Lifting and the Necessity of Making Lifters Prove Their Claims,” *Strength* 3(January 1917): 14-15, and Alan Calvert, “An Offer To Max Unger,” *Strength* 3(January 1917): 16.

⁸Alan Calvert, “In Regards to Lifting Records,” *Strength*, 5(November 1920): 50.

⁹Daily Diary, October 1, 1920. Coulter Papers.

¹⁰O. R. Coulter, “Concerning Lifting Records,” *Strength* 5(November 1920): 23-26.

¹¹Jowett to Coulter, 9 November 1920.

- ¹²George F. Jowett, "Arithmetic in Weight-Lifting," *Strength* 5(April 1921): 18.
- ¹³Bernard Bernard, "Strong Men of America, Unite!" *Health and Life* 1(July 1922): 70.
- ¹⁴Jowett to Coulter, 13 & 22 June 1922.
- ¹⁵Coulter to Jowett, 19 June 1922.
- ¹⁶"ACWLA Notes," *Health and Life* 1(September 1922): 100.
- ¹⁷Coulter to Jowett, 12 July 1922.
- ¹⁸Jowett to Coulter, 24 July 1922.
- ¹⁹Coulter to Jowett, n.d. [September 1922].
- ²⁰Jowett to Coulter, 14 October 1922.
- ²¹Jowett to Coulter 24 July 1922.
- ²²George F. Jowett, "The Romance of Strength." *Strength* 6(August 1922): 53-54.
- ²³Coulter to Jowett, n.d. [September 1922].
- ²⁴Jowett to Coulter, 14 October 1922.
- ²⁵See "With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 2(July, October, December 1923): 231, 338-39, and 410-11. It was also on this occasion that Angelo Siciliano, known as Charles Atlas, won the physique title of "World's Most Perfect Man" for the second time. Both Coulter and Jowett scoffed at Atlas' lifting and body measurement claims. He appeared more of a "conjurer" than an "athlete" to the latter. "His measurements. What a fake they are. If his forearm is 14 3/4 then mine is 17, & as for his lifting ability, that is more punk. Watch him Ottley, he will fall down. That stuff is no good." Jowett to Coulter, 19 December 1922.
- ²⁶Jowett to Coulter, 5 and 2 November 1922.
- ²⁷Jowett to Coulter 23 November 1922.
- ²⁸Calvert to Jowett, 6 December 1922.
- ²⁹Coulter to Jowett, 15 December 1922.
- ³⁰Jowett to Coulter, 19 December 1922.
- ³¹Coulter to Jowett, 11 January 1923.
- ³²Jowett to Coulter, 14 & 15 January 1923.
- ³⁴Ibid.
- ³⁵Coulter to Jowett, 21 January 1924.
- ³⁶Jowett to Coulter, 14 January 1923.
- ³⁷Jowett to Coulter, 23 January 1923. The other state representatives included F. J. Goldthwaite of Louisiana; Robert Snyder of Maryland Arthur Gay of New York William Holt of New Hampshire, and Ottley Coulter of Pennsylvania.
- ³⁸See David P. Willoughby, "Strong Men of the Far West" *Health and Life* 1(December 1922): 188-89, and 2(January 1923): 17 & 30; and "With the Men of Iron." *Health and Life* 2(May 1923): 159.
- ³⁹Jowett to Coulter, 5 February 1923.
- ⁴⁰Willoughby to Coulter, 19 March 1923.
- ⁴¹Coulter to Gay, 11 April 1923.
- ⁴²Jowett to Coulter, 15 January 1923.
- ⁴³Coulter to Jowett, 19 January 1923.
- ⁴⁴Jowett to Coulter, 6 & 15 February 1923.
- ⁴⁵Coulter to Jowett, 2 February 1923.
- ⁴⁶Coulter to Bernard 19 May 1923, and "With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 2(June, 1923): 195.
- ⁴⁷"A New Era Dawns," *Health and Life* 2(October 1923): 319.
- ⁴⁸Richard Bonner, "The March of a Great Athlete," *Health and Life* 2(September 1923): 302 & 322; and "The Development of Muscular Power and Beauty," *Health and Life* 2(December, 1923): 425.
- ⁴⁹"With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 2(November, 1923): 374.
- ⁵⁰Charles A. Smith to the author, 26 July 1989. Author's Collection.
- [Editor's note: Smith's words are curious in light of what he wrote in the April, 1955 issue of *Muscle Builder*, "One [incident] will remain ever green in my memory, and that's my first meeting with the immortal George F. Jowett." Smith continues, "In his younger and active days, Jowett was a Man among men. A one arm military press

of 140 pounds, a bent press of 286 pounds, a two hands jerk of 345." Among those who actually saw Jowett lift, Ottley Coulter was never prone to exaggerate poundages. His recollections in a 1968 letter to Vic Boff are helpful, "neither [of us had] done any training during that time. However, George did demonstrate at times to our pupils...On different occasions I saw George do a perfect one arm military press with a solid 100 lb. dumbbell and with apparent ease . . . Also, he demonstrated. . . how to do the perfect two arms military press . . . in accordance with the ACWLA rules. I saw him do this in perfect style with a 212 lb. barbell and with great ease. He could have done more, if there had been any reason to do so. . . He could also bend over backwards and pick up a handkerchief in his teeth." Bob Hoffman in an October, 1934 issue of *Strength & Health*, also marveled at Jowett's gymnastic abilities, especially since Jowett was well into his forties when he did the stunts Hoffman describes, "he could run much easier and lighter than I. He could turn back flips and cartwheels. . . and land with his weight of 238 as light as a feather." As for Jowett's lifting, Hoffman wrote, "I saw him make his two arm [record military] press of 250 pounds. With all his hard work irregular training and injuries of the past I saw him press 210 six times [and] make six presses one hand military style with 100 pounds . . . I have never seen such a terrific physical specimen. Tremendous arms, upper and forearm, nineteen inch shirts, a chest over fifty inches, legs like tree trunks, huge pectorals, trapezius and latissimus." As for "official" lifting, Jowett, in front of a sellout crowd and judges, created a new "world record" on May 24, 1918 in the continental and jerk with 310 pounds in Canada, at a bodyweight of 154 pounds and a height of approximately 5'4". So, although Jowett was not the "strongest man in the world" in the 1920's, he was an exceptionally strong and nimble man. Perhaps Jowett's tendency to boast had the effect of blinding some to his remarkable physical abilities.]

⁵¹Jowett to Coulter, n.d. [1924]. Jowett later noted that Barzen claimed that he and Coulter owed him \$700, but that the concern "only was in debt about \$200.00." Jowett to Coulter, 9 June 1924.

⁵²See successive issues of *Health and Life* 3(June-September 1924): 229 & 248, 269 & 284, 305 & 318, and 341.

⁵³"With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 2(May 1923): 159 & 178.

⁵⁴Coulter to Jowett, 14 February 1923.

⁵⁵Jowett to Coulter, 6 February 1923.

⁵⁶"With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 2(May 1923): 159.

⁵⁷Coulter to Willoughby, 1 June 1923.

⁵⁸Draft letter by Coulter on verso of Willoughby to Coulter, 26 August 1923.

⁵⁹David P. Willoughby, "With the Strong Men of the Far West:" *Health and Life* 2(December 1923): 14.

⁶⁰Willoughby to Coulter, 30 November 1923.

⁶¹David Willoughby, Report of the National Weight-Lifting Championships," *Health and Life* 3(June 1924): 236; David Willoughby, "Southern California Weightlifting Championship is Held at San Diego," *Health and Life* 3(August 1924): 305; and "Muscular Iron Men of the Far West," *Health and Life* 3(September 1924): 341.

⁶²Jowett to Coulter, n.d. [July 1924].

⁶³Ibid. [September 1924].

⁶⁴Alan, Calvert, "Enthusiasm Breeds Enthusiasm," *Strength* 9(November 1924): 30-31, & 88-89.

⁶⁵"Special Limited Time Offer," *Strength* 9(November 1924): 8.

⁶⁶Coulter to Jowett, 8 September 1924.

⁶⁷"With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 3(October 1924): 381.

⁶⁸David P. Willoughby, "A History of American Weight-Lifting," *Your Physique* 12(November 1949): 9.

⁶⁹Jowett to Coulter, n.d. [September 1924].

⁷⁰Coulter to Jowett, 14 September 1924.

⁷¹See Coulter to John Grimek, 20 December 1956.

⁷²"With the Men of Iron," *Health and Life* 3(December, 1924): 429.

⁷³"Now is Your Chance to Join The American Continental Weight-Lifters Association," *Strength* 9(December 1924): 10.