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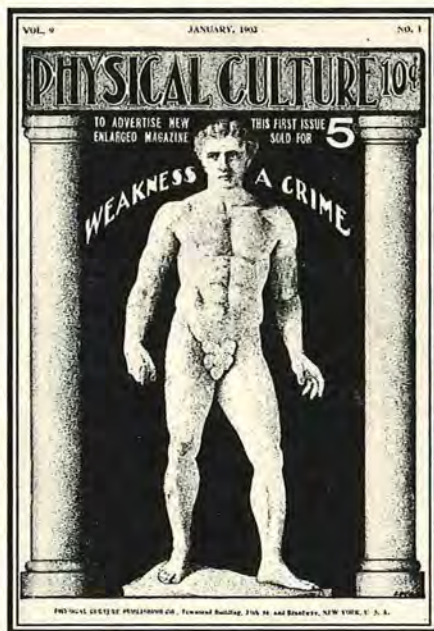
REFLECTIONS ON PHYSICAL CULTURE

DEFINING OUR FIELD AND PROTECTING ITS INTEGRITY

In the spring of 2015, Reaktion Press in Great Britain published *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym* by Eric Chaline.¹ I became aware of the book when a colleague forwarded to me a lengthy review from the *Irish Times*, which declared in the headline that the book was an “Exhaustive History” that “Takes Us from Ancient Greece to the Birth of Global Fitness.”² After reading novelist Rob Doyle’s positive review, which explained Chaline’s attempt to encapsulate 2800 years of physical culture history into 245 pages, I ordered a copy for the Stark Center’s library. Several days later, when I received the book, I did what most historians do and turned to the “selected bibliography” in the back to see what Chaline had used as sources. Although it was flattering to be listed more times than any other author (seven), I was surprised to see that Chaline included only some of my *Iron Game History* articles in his bibliography, and did not list my book on women’s exercise which has a lot to say about gymnasiums in the nineteenth century.³ As I looked further, I saw that John Fair’s *IGH* articles on bodybuilding and weightlifting were also not mentioned and, even more astonishingly, that there was no mention of Fair’s seminal *Muscle town USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell*.⁴ Similarly, Terry

Todd’s many articles on the history of the game were not mentioned except for the interview he and I did with Steve Reeves.⁵ “*The Last Interview*,” as we called that piece, was heavily used by Chaline as one of his main

sources on Muscle Beach. His other sources for that important moment in our sportive history consisted *in toto* of a Muscle Beach website, my *IGH* article on Pudgy Stockton, and an obscure 1980 book titled *Muscle Beach*, authored by Ed Murray, describing the “Muscle Beachniks.”⁶ Murray’s 147-page book has no sources, and describes a “Muscle Beach” totally unfamiliar to most Iron Gamers. His book is not about people like Pudgy and Les Stockton, Russ Saunders, Jack LaLanne, or Harold Zinkin. Among Murray’s cast of characters are “The Heap, The Face, Myron the Dancer, and their lawyer Suing Sydney.”⁷ The choice of Murray’s book as a major source



for the history of Muscle Beach is beyond lamentable. Given the existence of Harold Zinkin’s first-person memoir of his days at Muscle Beach; Marla Matzer Rose’s first-rate *Muscle Beach: Where the Best Bodies in the World Started a Fitness Revolution*; the innovative 2014 dissertation written by University of Texas scholar Tolga Ozyurtcu; and, of course literally hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles published over the

years; Chaline's decision to use none of these sources in a supposedly "exhaustive history" is, frankly, unpardonable.⁸

Also missing from Chaline's bibliography, however, are any references to books or articles by such well-known iron game authors as David P. Webster, David P. Willoughby, Randy Roach, or Bill Pearl. Pearl's three-volume *Legends of the Iron Game* would have been a great help to Chaline. Chaline also never mentions Joe and Ben Weider's *Brothers of Iron*, Dick Tyler and Dave Draper's *West Coast Bodybuilding Scene*, or any number of autobiographical books written by weightlifters and bodybuilders in recent years in

which gyms and the significant role they played in the careers of the authors are discussed.⁹ Even David Chapman is slighted. While Chapman's *Sandow the Magnificent* is included, none of Chapman's other books on strongmen, strongwomen, or physique photography are mentioned at all.¹⁰ Given this paucity of sourcing, the fact that Chaline also fails to use anything by historians Patricia Vertinsky, Roberta Park, Martha Verbrugge, Kenneth Dutton, Caroline de la Pena, or Kim Beckwith is hardly surprising. However, how he also missed using as sources Roberta Sassatelli's 2010 *Fitness Culture: Gyms and The Commercialization of Discipline and Fun*; Shelley McKenzie's *Getting Physical: The Rise of*

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Fitness Culture in America; and Alan Klein's landmark study of 1980s gym culture — *Little Big Men* — truly boggles the imagination.¹¹

A “selected bibliography” is not necessarily the full list of sources used in the production of a book, and it is true that Chaline includes a few other sources in his footnotes — although nearly all of those sources are websites. His very brief discussion of gym innovators Joe Gold, Vic Tanny, Ray Wilson, and their respective health club chains, for example, is taken strictly from web sites.¹² As for Jack LaLanne, an iron game figure, about whom more may have been written in the last century than almost anyone except Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chaline uses only one website and a single LaLanne book to tell the story of his long life in physical culture.¹³

As for the book's content, Chaline pays almost no attention to the early twentieth-century until Muscle Beach begins in California. He devotes virtually no space to Macfadden, says nothing about Attila's gym in New York, never mentions Thomas Inch in London, and omits all discussion of York Barbell, Bob Hoffman, John Grimek, and the famous Broad Street gym in York, Pennsylvania, which bears consideration as one of the more significant gyms in history. On page 150, Chaline incorrectly writes that Jack LaLanne had: “the first mixed-gender gym in the U.S.; the first to have women athletes, the physically challenged and the elderly working out with weights; and the first health club to provide health and nutritional advice.”¹⁴ Had Chaline bothered to spend any time on the history of gyms in the nineteenth century, he would have known that Dio Lewis was running co-ed gyms and using weights for men and women in the 1860s, that Dr. George Taylor ran a Movement Cure gym in New York City in the 1850s, and that George Barker Windship and David P. Butler had men and women practicing health lifting in the 1860s.¹⁵ Chaline does not even seem to know that Sandow dispensed exercise and nutritional advice to men and women at his London gym.¹⁶ Over on page 151, to cite another major error, Chaline explains that Ray Wilson and Bob Delmonteque's American Health Studios were “the first gyms to offer therapeutic facilities to members,” ignoring entirely the decades of movement cure therapies that included the “remedial work” promoted by Harvard's Dudley Allen Sargent, Sandow's Curative Institute of Physical Culture in the early twentieth century, and Gustav Zander's revolutionary exercise

machines, all of which had therapeutic applications.¹⁷

Why should we worry about a book like this? Why not just ignore it, a reader might ask. I raise these criticisms because, unfortunately, until someone comes along and writes an accurate, well-researched history of gyms, the unknowing public and even many academics, will turn to Chaline's book as a trustworthy source on physical culture history. The fact that it is *so* riddled with errors, however, may well mean that Chaline's misinformation will continue to be passed forward to new readers, and will undermine the integrity of the emerging field of physical culture studies within the academic community.

I can easily imagine a future, for example, in which a student cites Chaline's assertion on page 64 that when the Farnese Hercules was unearthed during the Renaissance, Cardinal Allesandro Farnese asked a contemporary sculptor to “replace its missing lower half.” Chaline's book leads one to believe that half the statue was carved in the Renaissance, when in reality, the statue was only missing a leg from the knee down — a leg that was later found and replaced.¹⁸ Or, as Chaline asserts on page 181, will future scholars believe that Sandow “promoted” the career of Katie Sandwina, when in fact they hardly associated?¹⁹ There are many other errors, both large and small, in Chaline's book, but he is not the only transgressor.

David Waller's book *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugen Sandow, Victorian Strongman*, released in 2011, is vastly superior to Chaline's effort, yet also contains troubling mistakes that reveal Waller's lack of real understanding of physical culture. In a description of Sandow posing in his show costume, for example, Waller explains that Sandow is wearing “harlequin socks,” rather than Roman sandals — Sandow's normal footwear when he performed. In another place he claims that Katie Sandwina “was a maid of German extraction who had 17.5” biceps, 26.5” calves and a good claim to be the strongest woman in the world.”²⁰ Where Waller found such large numbers for Sandwina's measurements is unknown. However, had he bothered to check them, he could easily have discovered that Sandwina was measured by physicians at a press event announcing her as one of the stars of the 1911 season for the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Reporters were in the room as she was measured and found to be: 5 feet 9¾ inches tall, 210 pounds in weight, with a 44¼ inch chest measurement (expanded), a 29

inch waist, 43 inch hips, a 16 $\frac{1}{16}$ inch calf, and a flexed right biceps measurement of 14 inches.²¹ Historians working in the fields of circus, theater, and physical culture history generally know to be suspicious of lifts and measurements claimed by press agents. Had Waller taken time to do some research — rather than accepting the measurements at face value — he would have realized the impossibility of her calf being larger than the also exaggerated 24" claimed by the John Robinson Circus in 1898 for Louis Cyr. Historian David Willoughby, whose life was dedicated to understanding the limits of human potential, estimated Cyr's calf at "only" 18 inches in the strongman's prime.²²



While mistakes will happen from time to time, my deeper concern is how we can strengthen the field of Physical Culture Studies and attract more historians to our field. I first began thinking about this in 1987 when I won the graduate essay contest of the North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) and was invited to Vancouver to present my paper at the society's annual conference. At the final banquet Jack Berryman, then NASSH president, took me aside to tell me how much he had enjoyed my paper about Bernarr Macfadden's ideas on exercise for women and that he thought I would like to know that there had been a spirited discussion among the members of the selection committee about whether my paper was actually eligible for consideration. The issue, Berryman explained, was that I had written about exercise, rather than competitive sport, and some members of the committee were not sure that exercise fit under the umbrella of the society. Until that moment it had never occurred to me that people would view the study of exercise as belonging outside the boundaries of sport history. And, as time passed, I have realized all too often how little attention we pay to the history of exercise in both our public schools and universities.

I am happy to report that research related to the study of physical culture is no longer unusual in the field of sport history. In 2012, Kim Beckwith, Tommy Hunt, Tolga Ozyurtcu and I made presentations at NASSH about the state of physical culture history. We reported to those attending our session that approximately 20 percent of the papers delivered at NASSH's annual conference each year now deal with physical culture topics such as exercise, embodiment, media representations of the body, definitions of masculinity and femininity with-

in a sporting context, and increasingly, with studies of training practices, exercise methods, the evolution of exercise science, and the history of weightlifting, bodybuilding, and powerlifting.²³

While it has been gratifying to see the growth of historical work by real historians in "physical culture," other parts of the academic community, particularly sport sociology and media studies, are also embracing what they call physical cultural studies — although many of them seem to be leaving history out of their definition of the field. For example, Routledge Press in Great Britain released an anthology, *Critical Readings in Bodybuilding*, edited by Adam Locks and Niall Richardson in 2012. Locks is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Chichester University, and Niall Richardson teaches film studies at the University of Sussex. *Critical Readings*, they explained in their introduction was conceived as a book to explore the contemporary practice of bodybuilding and to also explore eroticism and sexuality related to the sport.²⁴ Because of the book's contemporary focus, there is no history article *per se* in the anthology, but Locks' lengthy introduction to the book serves that purpose and touches on Bernarr Macfadden, Charles Atlas, Bob Hoffman, Joe Weider, Steve Reeves, and Arnold Schwarzenegger.²⁵

Sadly, Locks' "history" is once again filled with errors. He claims that Sandow coined the term bodybuilding — which was already being used by the YMCA's Robert J. Roberts in the 1890s, and asserts that Bob Hoffman was the first American barbell entrepreneur, ignoring the contributions of Alan Calvert, who founded the Milo Barbell Company in 1902.²⁶ Locks also claims that the Weider magazines of the 1940s and 1950s were devoted exclusively to bodybuilding, when in reality they also covered weightlifting, nutrition, and advised people to use barbells for sport training. He even states that John Grimek (who lived and worked in York, Pennsylvania for his entire adult life, and visited California only occasionally) was the most important bodybuilder at Muscle Beach in the 1940s, a statement that would undoubtedly have raised the eyebrows of Steve Reeves, George Eiferman, and Jack LaLanne, who were there far more frequently than Grimek. Locks even claims that Larry Scott was the most important bodybuilder at Muscle Beach in the mid-sixties, whereas Larry Scott trained at Vince Gironda's gym in Studio City, California, and the original Muscle Beach was closed by city officials in the late 1950s.²⁷

I know some may think I am starting to sound overly critical here — even for a book called *Critical Readings in Bodybuilding*. However, the number of errors of fact in a book aimed at classroom use for future scholars in physical cultural studies is genuinely alarming. Even more distressing is the fact that Locks' and Richardson's lack of knowledge of the history of physical culture also reveals how unprepared they were to serve as editors of the volume. For example, anthropologist Ann Bolin has an essay in the book about women's bodybuilding in which she writes: "Time has shown that virtually any activity that threatens the hegemonic gender order will call into question the gender authenticity of its participants. This debate surfaced in the infancy of women's bodybuilding when Gloria Miller Fudge took off her high heels. It arose again when Cammie Lusko (1980 Miss Olympia) presented a 'hardcore muscular routine.'"28 However the correct name of the early bodybuilder mentioned is Georgia Miller Fudge, not Gloria. Further, Fudge is not the bodybuilder who famously took off her high heels in 1979, closed her fists when posing, and set women's bodybuilding on its modern path. That was Laura Combes. Combes' performance was even written about in *Sports Illustrated*.29 And Cammie Lusko was never Miss Olympia. The winner of the first Ms. Olympia in 1980 was Rachel McLish. Lusko finished ninth.30



Academic history is a curious profession. Before the founding of the American Historical Association in 1884, few universities had professional historians on their staff, as history was largely written by wealthy men with time on their hands and access to books and rare manuscripts. The same has been true in the field of physical culture history. Until the past couple of decades, historical scholarship on strongmen, bodybuilding, and weight training of all sorts has largely been written by men who had private collections such as Edmund Desbonnet in France, David Willoughby in the United States, and, most prolific of them all, David Webster OBE in Scotland. One reason for the lack of earlier scholarly attention is because sources in the pre-internet era were scarce and because the term "physical culture" has had such a checkered history within the academic community — and even popular culture — in America. Before talking about the academic side of all this, however, I would like to examine the evolution of the term

"physical culture."

The earliest use I can find in print appeared in a 1787 book by Adolphus Vongnieur, entitled *Treatise on the Bane of Vice*.31 Vongnieur uses the term to speak of guiding growth and maturation — as was also meant when "physical culture" was used in the lengthy title of Dr. Samuel Hare's 1838, *Practical Observations on the Causes and Treatment of Curvatures of the Spine, with Hygienic Directions for the Physical Culture of Youth*.32 In November 1860, Dio Lewis uses the term as the subtitle for his new monthly magazine and then, following Lewis' use — it quickly began appearing in many other books and magazines in the late nineteenth century as a descriptive "umbrella" term for exercise, fitness, and the pursuit of health.33 The *Water Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms*, for example, renamed itself the *Herald of Reform and Journal of Physical Culture* in 1863. Sim Kehoe used it as the subtitle of his popular Indian club book in 1866.34 By the end of the nineteenth century "physical culture" had even made its way into universities and schools where it was often used to describe physical education programs and physical training classes.35 In the late nineteenth century, sport and games were not significant factors in most school physical education programs and so the term "physical culture" evoked for the early, pioneering physical educators the idea of rational, systematic training — what I called in my book "purposive exercise," to differentiate it from competitive sport and recreation.

At the turn of the twentieth century, however, the term physical culture began to fall into disfavor in academic circles. This is probably due in large part to the fact that both Sandow in 1898 and — especially — Bernarr Macfadden in 1899, adopted the term as the title of their respective magazines.36 After that time—while the term did not "go viral" in our modern sense of that word — the healthy sales of both magazines made the term widely known. In the pages of Macfadden's *Physical Culture*, and in the dozens of training courses and articles in health and fitness magazines that appeared during the first decades of the twentieth century, the term physical culture began to be used for a set of holistic health practices that encompassed nutrition, fresh air, proper digestion, adequate sleep, and the other tenets of what Americans in earlier times had referred to as the "Laws of Health."37 It became, as historian David Kirk argues, "a way of life." Physical culture systems were not just exercise routines, Kirk explains, they were also

“embedded in beliefs, knowledge, and broader individual and social practices.”³⁸ In fact, if we were able to speak to the readers of these early health and fitness magazines, they would probably tell you they were physical culturists — not bodybuilders, and not mere weight trainers. Jack Lalanne’s daughter, Dr. Yvonne Laraine Rubio, told me in 2012 that when someone asked her father what he did for a living he always said he was a “physical culturist.”³⁹ Similarly, Pudgy and Les Stockton told me on more than one occasion that they never thought of themselves as bodybuilders at Muscle Beach — they were physical culturists.⁴⁰

My belief is that in America, Macfadden’s personal eccentricities, his connections to such at-that-time academically suspect activities as weightlifting and vegetarianism and his contempt for most aspects of traditional medicine, alienated the medical and academic community. As a consequence, during the first half of the twentieth century, most university programs began abandoning the term physical culture and using instead such terms as physical training or physical education to describe their curriculum. As a consequence the term physical culture moved outside the American academy until late in the twentieth century.

In Europe and other parts of the world, however, the term “physical culture” has remained in much more common use in academic circles.⁴¹ However, in almost all of these countries the term is used as an all-inclusive term to describe all kinds of human movement, including competitive sport, dance, recreation, and exercise, rather than the way we generally define it in the United States.⁴²

In recent decades, the term “physical culture” has begun to creep back into American academia. I like to think that Terry and I played a role in returning the term to academic respectability. For example, we began calling our collection of books, magazines, and related materials the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection back in the early 1980s, and in 1990 we began publishing this journal — *Iron Game History: the Journal of Physical Culture*. And, of course, the full name of our academic research center is the H.J. Lutzer Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports. At The University of Texas in Austin we now offer an undergraduate major called “Physical Culture and Sports,” and our doctoral program in sport history is called the Ph.D. Program in Physical Culture and Sport Studies.⁴³

These uses of the term all suggest that “physical

culture” is somehow separate from “sport,” and that was exactly what we tried to convey as we were establishing the Stark Center. As part of that effort we decided we needed to define the term — since we used it in our name from the beginning. The definition we finally arrived at is this: “Physical Culture is a term used to describe the various activities people have employed over the centuries to strengthen their bodies, enhance their physiques, increase their endurance, enhance their health, fight against aging, and become better athletes.”

Encyclopedia Britannica defines physical culture in a somewhat longer but similar fashion: “A philosophy, regimen, or lifestyle seeking maximum physical development through such means as weight (resistance) training, diet, aerobic activity, athletic competition, and mental discipline. Specific benefits include improvements in health, appearance, strength, endurance, flexibility, speed, and general fitness as well as greater proficiency in sport-related activities.”⁴⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition is much shorter: “the development and strengthening of the body, esp. by means of regular exercise.”⁴⁵ Feminist scholars Patricia Vertinsky and Jennifer Hargreaves use it in yet another way. In their book, *Physical Culture, Power and the Body* — they use the term to refer to “all activities in which the body itself — its anatomy, its physicality, and most importantly, its forms of movements — is the very purpose, *raison d’être* of the activity.”⁴⁶



However we define it, there is no question that the field of Physical Culture Studies is growing and finding greater academic acceptance. Even so, as Ben Franklin once observed, “It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad act to destroy it.” Franklin’s comment reflects the essence of my concern about such poorly sourced and inadequately researched books as Eric Chaline’s *The Temple of Perfection*. I continue to hope that we are moving toward a time in which the contributions of Eugen Sandow, Bernarr Macfadden, Joseph Pilates, Professor Attila, Jack LaLanne, Dr. Thomas DeLorme, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jane Fonda, Kenneth Cooper, and Boyd Epley are taught in our college sport history classes alongside the stories of Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones, Jesse Owens, Billie Jean King, Jackie Robinson, Jim Thorpe, and Muhammad Ali. If we can move to a time when the history of physical culture is no longer margin-

alized and is, instead, fully part of our sport history curriculum — it will be far less likely that books such as *Critical Readings in Bodybuilding* and *Temple of Perfection* will find publishers who do not see the glaring errors contained in them. It can also be hoped that the burgeoning group of young scholars who want to study and write about strength, bodybuilding, and other forms of body culture will no longer consider themselves anything less than true sport historians.

— Jan Todd

NOTES

In several places in this essay I refer to the work of scholars by name only and do not include a footnote with a list of their publications. This is done solely because of space in the journal. I will happily provide a full list of publications by these scholars upon request.

1. Eric Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2015).
2. Rob Doyle, "The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym by Eric Chaline: Exhaustive History of the Gym Takes Us from Ancient Greece to Global Business," *Irish Times*, 29 March 2015.
3. Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998). Curiously, an illustration from the book is cited in footnote 21, on page 258, which suggests he saw a copy at some point.
4. John Fair, *Muscle Town USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (State College, PA: Penn State Press, 1999). There are also no references to Fair's articles on physical culture published in other academic journals.
5. Terry Todd and Jan Todd, "The Last Interview," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 6, no. 4 (December 2000): 1-14.
6. Ed Murray, *Muscle Beach* (London: Arrow Books, 1980), back cover.
7. Ibid.
8. Harold Zinkin, *Remembering Muscle Beach: Where Hard Bodies Began — Photographs and Memories* (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 1999); Marla Matzer Rose, *Remembering Muscle Beach: Where the Best Bodies in the World Started a Fitness Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001); Tolga Ozyurtcu, "Flex Marks the Spot: Histories of Muscle Beach," (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2014).
9. Examples of books Chaline might have used include: David P. Webster, *The Iron Game: An Illustrated History of Weight-Lifting* (Irvine, Scotland: by the author, 1976); David P. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes* (South Brunswick, NJ: A.S. Barnes, 1970); Joe Weider, Ben Weider and Mike Steere, *Brothers of Iron: Building the Weider Empire* (Los Angeles: Sports Publishing, 2006); Dick Tyler and Dave Draper, *West Coast Bodybuilding Scene: The Golden Era* (Santa Cruz, CA: On Target, 2004); Bill Pearl, *Legends of the Iron Game*, 3 vols. (Phoenix, OR: Bill Pearl Enterprises, 2010); Randy Roach, *Muscle Smoke and Mirrors*, vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse Publishing, 2008).
10. David Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994 & 2006). Other Chapman books that might have helped Chaline include: David Chapman, *American Hunks: The Muscular Male Body in Popular Culture: 1860-1970* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2009); David Chapman and Patricia Vertinsky, *Venus with Biceps, A Pictorial History of Muscular Women* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011); and David Chapman, *Victor, Victorians, Early Photographs of the Muscular Male* (Simons Town, South Africa: Janssen Publishing, 2004).
11. Roberta Sassatelli, *Fitness Culture: Gyms and The Commercialization of Discipline and Fun* (New York: Macmillan, 2010); Shelley McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013); Allen Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction* (Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 1993).
12. Chaline covers the rise of modern chains such as American Health Studios, Gold's Gyms and Bally Fitness in four-and-a-half pages in the book. The single source listed for Joe Gold was, "Golden Age Legends: Part One: Golden Age Greats," at www.bodybuilding.com. The article is no longer on-line. He lists two web sources for Vic Tanny: "Vic Tanny" at www.iron-age-classic-bodybuilding.com, and Josh Buck, "The Evolution of Health Clubs" <http://clubindustry.com/forprofits/evolution-health-clubs>. Buck's article is still on-line and is well-researched and useful, although hardly comprehensive. Chaline's very brief discussion of Ray Wilson, his American Health Studios chain, and the rise of Bally Fitness were all taken from "Company Histories: Bally Total Fitness," at www.fundinguniverse.com. That link also no longer works.
13. Jack LaLanne, *The Jack LaLanne Way to Vibrant Good Health* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1961); and www.Jackqueline.com.
14. Chaline, *Temple of Perfection*, 150.
15. Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 145-149, 185-198, 211-236.
16. Nor does Chaline discuss any of the hydropathic sanitariums and health homes in Battle Creek, Michigan and other parts of the country, most of which not only had a gym of some sort on their grounds but also dispensed nutritional advice.
17. Eugen Sandow, *Sandow's Curative Institute of Physical Culture* (London: by the author, n.d.) viewed at: www.dandizette.com/library/he/intro.htm. For information on Zander and Dudley Allen Sargent see Caroline de la Pena, *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American* (Albany: New York University Press, 2005).
18. Jan Todd, "The History of Cardinal Farnese's 'Weary Hercules,'" *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 9, no. 1 (August 2005): 29-34.
19. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent*, 164-165.
20. David Waller, *The Perfect Man: The Muscular Life and Times of Eugen Sandow, Victorian Strongman* (Brighton, UK: Victorian Secrets, Ltd., 2011), 140.
21. "Frau Sandwina Perfect Woman," *New York Telegraph*, 3 April 1911; "Frau Sandwina Circus Marvel, Physically Perfect, Experts

- Find," *New York Herald*, 3 April 1911. Reported in Jan Todd, "Center Ring: Katie Sandwina and the Construction of Celebrity," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 10, no. 1 (November 2007): 9.
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26. Deane J. Brink, *The Body Builder, Robert J. Roberts; Being a Collection of Drills and Health Hints, and Appreciations of the Man who Blazed the Trail for Physical Education in the Young Men's Christian Association* (New York: Association Press, 1916), 23-24. Kimberly Beckwith, "Building Strength: Alan Calvert, The Milo Bar-Bell Company, and the Modernization of American Weight Training" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2006).
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30. "1980 Ms. Olympia," Wikipedia.com, viewed at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980_Ms._Olympia.
31. Adolphus Vongnieur, *A Treatise on the Bane of Vice* (London: L. Pennington, 1787), 41.
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33. Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful*, 239-240.
34. Sim D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise: With Explanatory Figures and Positions: Photographed From Life: Also, General Remarks on Physical Culture* (New York: Peck and Snyder, 1866).
35. See, for example, Nathan Allen, *Physical Culture in Amherst College* (Lowell: 1873). Dudley Allen Sargent's title at Harvard when hired in 1879 was "Director of Physical Culture."
36. Sandow launched his *Physical Culture* magazine in July 1998; Macfadden began publishing his *Physical Culture* in March 1899. See: Jan Todd, Joe Roark and Terry Todd, "A Briefly Annotated Bibliography of English Language Serial Publications in the Field of Physical Culture," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 1, nos. 4 and 5 (March 1991): 27.
37. Jack Berryman, "The Tradition of the Six Things Non-Natural: Exercise and Medicine from Hippocrates through Ante-Bellum America," *Exercise & Sport Sciences Reviews* 17, no. 1 (January 1989): 515-560.
38. David Kirk, "Physical Culture, Physical Education and Rational Analysis," *Sport, Education and Society*, 4, no. 1 (1999): 63-79.
39. Interview with Yvonne LaLanne Rubio, San Francisco, California, 22 May 2012.
40. Author's memory, confirmed by Terry Todd.
41. Ivo Jirasek and Peter Hopsicker, "Philosophical Kinanthropology (Philosophy of Physical Culture, Philosophy of Sport) in Slavonic Countries: The Culture, the Writers, and the Current Directions," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 37 (2012): 253-270. See also the fascinating article published in the journal *Kinesiology*, by a group of Croatia scholars who found that the following terms are now being used on both sides of the Atlantic to describe our departments: sport, sport science, exercise science, human performance, movement science, human kinetics, kinesiology, kinanthropology, anthropomotrics, anthropokinetics, anthropokinesiology, health, physical education, physical culture, recreation, leisure studies, and so on. Zrinko Custonja, Dragan Milanovic, and Goran Sporis, "Kinesiology in the Names of Higher Education Institutions in Europe and the United States of America," *Kinesiology-International Journal of Fundamental and Applied Kinesiology (Croatia)* 41, no. 2 (2009): 136-146.
42. See for example: Darwin Semotiuk, "Some Historical Interpretations of Physical Culture in the People's Republic of China," *Proceedings of the North American Society for Sport History*, 1974, London, Ontario; James Riordan and Robin Jones, *Sport and Physical Education in China* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1999); James Riordan, *Sport Under Communism: The U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, The G.D.R., China, Cuba* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 1981); and Roland Renson, "From Physical Education to Kinanthropology: A Quest for Academic and Professional Identity," *Quest* 41 (1989): 5-14.
43. Outside UT, a number of other universities now offering classes and/or degree programs that include physical culture. Susan Zieff uses the term in the title of her "Research Group for Studies in Physical Culture, Sport and Education," at San Francisco State; and the University of Rhode Island offers a Masters in Cultural Studies in Sport and Physical Culture. There is also a second journal now in the field called *Physical Culture & Sport: Studies and Research*.
44. "Physical Culture," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, viewed at: www.britannica.com/topic/physical-culture.
45. "Physical Culture," *Oxford English Dictionary On-Line* viewed at: www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/Entry/143120?redirectedFrom=physical+culture#eid30456917.
46. Patricia Vertinsky and Jennifer Hargreaves, *Physical Culture, Power and the Body* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1.

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THE USA VS. THE WORLD:

AN ANALYTICAL NARRATIVE OF AMERICAN, WORLD, AND OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING RESULTS, 1970-1992

Part Three of a Three-Part Series

John D. Fair

The University of Texas at Austin

In our country physical culture is sport for the people, in our country millions participate in the physical culture movement. And it is obvious that talented athletes will sooner be found among these millions than among thousands, and that it is easier to find talented athletes among thousands than among hundreds.

—Mikhail Kalinin*

One of the hot questions of the day seems to be, 'Why isn't the United States the Olympic power it once was?' ... I think much of our slip in international sports stature has to do with the ineffectiveness of the very system our nation relies on to develop our young athletes.

—Dr. Robert Voy**

Editors' Note: Following the 2015 World Weightlifting Championships in Houston, Texas, the sport of weightlifting received yet another blow to its already scarred reputation when the IWF released the news that 17 athletes, 12 men and five women, tested positive, including Russian Aleksei Lovchev, who broke world records in the superheavyweight class. Already banned from the 2015 Worlds were 11 Bulgarian weightlifters who failed a pre-competition drug test conducted at their home camp. Although no Americans tested positive at the Worlds, it's disheartening that even with the disqualification of these 28 athletes, no American man qualified for the 2016 Olympics. In the team competition at the Worlds the American women finished 14th; the men placed 28th. This final article in John Fair's three-part series on American weightlifting could hardly be more timely, as the sport's most recent drug scandal may resurrect past debates in the IOC about whether weightlifting should be banned from the Olympic family.

In the wake of America's lackluster performance in the 1972 Olympics, President Gerald R. Ford established the President's Commission on Olympic Sports to determine what factors were hampering the United States from entering its best amateur athletes in the Olympics and other international sporting events. To this end newly-elected national weightlifting chairman Murray Levin, along with previous chairman Bob Crist, AAU executive director Jim Stevens, and middleweight champion Russell Knipp, were subjected to a closed hearing in Washington, conducted by New York Congressman Jack Kemp to examine the shortcomings of their program. Levin recalls as he entered the room Kemp was

... screaming and yelling and saying 'it looks like the whole sport is controlled by Bob Hoffman. Hoffman puts up all the money, Hoffman has the York team members that travel all over the world. They represent him. They win the medals, but it's all York, York, York, and maybe that's what's wrong with United States weightlifting; that one man is controlling everything financially.' And he said, 'I have it on good authority that he put up \$400,000 to send all those teams around the world.' Now I'm lis-

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*John N. Washburn, "Sport as a Soviet Tool," *Foreign Affairs* 34 no. 3 (April 1956): 494. Mikhail Kalinin had been a chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Robert Voy, *Drugs, Sport, and Politics* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1991), 131.

*tening to this. And after hearing this raving and ranting for about fifteen or twenty minutes, I blew my stack. I said, 'you're wrong, it wasn't \$400,000, it was \$600,000. I know the facts and the figures.' I said, 'where in the hell were you guys in Washington when the Russians were walking around the arena in 1968 holding the flag out in front of them. Our guys are training with tattered sweat suits in basements and garages. Where were you in the thirties, the forties, and the fifties, and the sixties when we needed you? ... One man did all this, and you did nothing.'*¹

Levin and his colleagues could at least be consoled that weightlifting was not the only amateur sport under fire, but they resented Kemp's appalling ignorance of the past achievements of America's strongest Olympic athletes and ingratitude towards the promoter who almost single-handedly made them possible. With virtually no government assistance Bob Hoffman, often styled by himself and others as, the "Father of American Weightlifting," had enlisted the likes of John Davis, Tommy Kono, Pete George, Norbert Schemansky, and Chuck Vinci to make his teams the envy of the world. Prior to 1970 his lifters harvested a total of 117 medals in Olympic and world championships in 27 years of competition, averaging 4.33 medals per year.²

But during the next 23 years, on which this study focuses, American lifters garnered only five medals or .22 per year. Bantamweight Vinci was the last American male to win an Olympic gold medal in 1960, and Super-Heavyweight Joe Dube was the last American world champion in 1969. Furthermore, after dwindling steadily since the early 1960s, no American weightlifting medals were won at the Munich Olympics in 1972. While Dube rightly reckons in retrospect that America's decline can be primarily attributed to "the absence of Bob Hoffman," the germane question addressed by this three-part study is what was done to fill that void and why these efforts were inadequate.³ The first installment, a statistical analysis, defined the nature of the problem, while the second, drawing on contemporary publications, established an interpretive framework that emphasized culture as a critical component to performance on the international level.⁴

Voices of Experience

This final installment underscores that influence. Consisting largely of oral testimonies over 16 months, it draws on the collective memories and wisdom of 23 lifters, officials, and promoters who lived through at least three decades of American decline vis-à-vis the world. About 1,100 years would be a conservative estimate of the commitment of these individuals (some going back to the 1940s) to weightlifting. Most importantly their prolonged experience, drawn from all levels of participation, shades of opinion, and geographical diversity, enables them to view multiple dimensions of a problem that has defied any easy solution for a half century. What they suggest is that while the influence of leaders, lifters, and organizations cannot be discounted, America's lackluster performance was systemic. With money and talent migrating to more lucrative sectors of the nation's sports-crazed society, weightlifting remained true to its antiquated amateur origins and lapsed into a culture of underachievement.

Unlike most scholarly studies or the preceding articles in this series, every effort will be made in this article to allow each of the interviewees to speak in their own words as much as possible in the narrative. Hence citations of quotations from interviews will be embedded in the text itself, and footnotes will be reserved for additional information. Therefore it is important at the outset to introduce the 24 weightlifting insiders for whom I gratefully acknowledge assistance:

Wesley Barnett — United States Olympic Team Member in 1992 and 1996 in the 90 kilo class and former Executive Director of USA Weightlifting — 13 February 2013, Colorado Springs, CO (Personal Interview).⁵

Dragomir Cioroslan — Olympic bronze medalist for Romania in 1984, former United States National Weightlifting Coach, and current Director of International Strategies and Development for the USOC — 13 February 2013, Colorado Springs, CO (Personal Interview).

Mike Conroy — International Level Coach and Director of Coaching Education for USA Weightlifting — 13 February 2013, Colorado Springs, CO (Personal Interview).

John Coffee — Georgia gym owner and coach for nearly a half century whose women's teams have won 18 national titles — December 2012, Marietta, GA.

Bob Crist — Founder of the Lower Peninsula Weightlifting Club and Chairman of the National Weightlifting Committee from 1971 to 1976 — 21 June 2012, Hampton, VA (Telephone Interview).

Louis DeMarco — President of Team Pendragon, Coach of national and international teams, and former member of the USA Weightlifting Board of Directors — 8 and 26 September 2013, Cortland, OH (Telephone Interview).

Arthur Drechsler — Former Junior World Record Holder and current Chair of the USA Weightlifting Board of Directors — 7 November 2013, Flushing, NY (e-mail).

Pete George — National weightlifting champion in 1946, world champion in 1947, silver medalist at the 1948 and 1956 Olympics and gold medalist in 1952 — 11 July 2012, Honolulu, HI (e-mail).

Ben Green — Veteran national-level weightlifter and coach who has been a key figure in Southern weightlifting since the 1970s — 1 November 2012, Newnan, GA (Personal Interview).

Gayle Hatch — Founder of the Gayle Hatch Weightlifting Club which has won forty national titles and coach of the 2004 United States Olympic Weightlifting Team — 4 January 2013, Baton Rouge, LA (Personal Interview).

Bruce Klemens — Avid lifter and prolific writer and photographer who has covered virtually all major weightlifting meets since the 1970s — 31 January 2013, Oak Ridge, NJ (Telephone Interview).

Tommy Kono — Winner of Olympic gold medals in 1952 and 1956 and six world championships, often cited as the greatest weightlifter of all time — 12 July 2012, Alea, HI (e-mail).⁶

Murray Levin — Served as President of the United States Weightlifting Federation from 1976 to 1988 and organized the 1977 World Championships in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania — 30 March 2013, Boca Raton, FL (Telephone Interview).

Laurie Lopez — A mainstay for many years at USA Weightlifting, currently Director of Operations — 13 February 2013, Colorado Springs, FL (Personal Interview).

Jim Lorimer — Organized the 1967 national championships and 1970 world championships and administered the annual Arnold Sports Festival & Fitness Weekend in Columbus, Ohio, since 1989 — 25 June 2013, Columbus, OH (Telephone Interview).⁷

Carl Miller — A protégé of Frank Spellman, 1948 Olympic gold medalist, Miller served as first National Weightlifting Coordinator in the 1970s, authored *The Sport of Olympic-Style Weightlifting* (2011), and has operated Carl and Sandra's Physical Conditioning Center for three decades — 5 February 2012, Santa Fe, NM (Personal Interview).⁸

Harvey Newton — Served as first National Coach (1981-84) and Executive Director of USA Weightlifting (1982-88). Author of *Explosive Lifting for Sports* and editor of *Harvey Newton's Weightlifting eBulletin* — 16 October 2013, Ormond Beach, FL (Telephone Interview).

Denis Reno — National Weightlifting Coaching Coordinator in the mid-1970s and editor of *Denis Reno's Weightlifter's Newsletter* since 1969 — 12 August 2012, West Newton, MA (Personal Interview).

Mark Rippetoe — Former powerlifter and owner of the Wichita Falls Athletic Club who has authored *Starting Strength* and conducts strength seminars throughout the nation — 12 December 2012, Wichita Falls, TX (Telephone Interview).⁹

Jim Schmitz — Holds a degree in physical education from California State University at San Francisco and since 1972 has owned the Sports Palace where he has coached numerous elite lifters, including a total of ten athletes on seven consecutive Olympic teams — 9 April 2013, San Francisco, CA (Telephone Interview).¹⁰

Les Simonton — Serves as Coach of the East Alabama Weightlifting Club and as USAW Board of Directors Secretary — 6 October 2012, Auburn, AL (Personal Interview).

Zygmunt Smalcerz — 1972 Olympic Champion for Poland and Current USA National Weightlifting Coach — 13 February 2013, Colorado Springs, CO (Personal Interview).¹¹

Mike Stone — Holds a Ph.D. from Florida State University, author of numerous articles on physiology and biomechanics, former head of Sports Physiology for the United States Olympic Committee and currently a professor of exercise science at East Tennessee State University — 25 October 2013, Johnson City, TN (Telephone Interview).

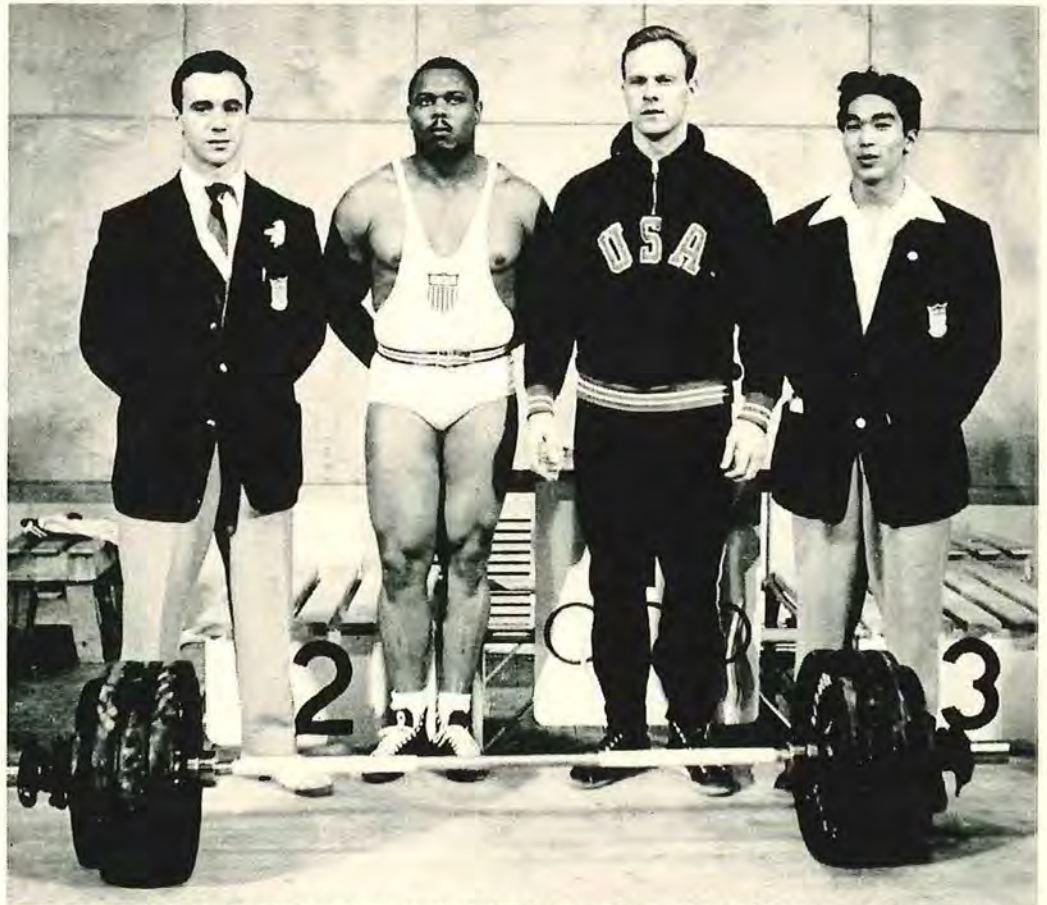
Terry Todd — Holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas, junior national champion in weightlifting, national champion in powerlifting, former editor of *Strength & Health* magazine, founder and director of the Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports at the Uni-

versity of Texas (Email Communication).

The Numbers Game

Admittedly nearly all of these authorities use the present as their reference point, but in this case the past *is* the present. They virtually all concur that the need for greater numbers of weightlifters was as true in earlier decades as it is now. "You've got to get the numbers," argues Carl Miller. Most would agree that the best sources of recruitment have traditionally been the schools, recreational centers, and YMCAs. "If you had Olympic weightlifting in all of the high schools, then that would increase your numbers," observes Gayle Hatch. "That's what the Russians have. They may start out with 100,000 lifters and then it comes down to the elite. We don't have that." Arguably the greatest handicap to recruitment and having weightlifting competitions in schools is the presence of football as the dominant sport. Until the early to mid-1960s, most football coaches vehemently opposed weight training, but during the fitness revolution of the 1970s weights ceased being taboo and quickly became a requirement for athletes in all sports. Thereafter coaches had to jealously guard their turf out of fear that players would like lifting more than football. "One of the things weightlifting has to do," Les Simonton points out,

is be careful not to tread on any big toes because football is an 800-pound gorilla, and particularly in high schools. I've heard time and again from weightlifting coaches that the football



Pete George, John Davis, Norbert Schemansky, and Tommy Kono — four of the greatest weightlifters in history — represented the U.S. in many world championships during the same general era, winning a total of 20 world championships and 12 Olympic medals — six golds, four silvers, and two bronzes.

coaches are very protective of their talent. They don't want to lose anybody to weightlifting or to any other sport, but because they have to use weightlifting in their training they think there's more of a danger there, and so weightlifting has to approach football more as a partner and not as an adversary.

The best example of overcoming that obstacle was when Michael Cohen, a former national champion and physical education teacher at Jenkins High School in Savannah, Georgia, formed Team Savannah in 1988. As Wes Barnett explains, "they were in the schools, they had access to all these kids, so they had a lot of people to cull from, and then as the cream rose to the top, they were funded, they had facilities, they had their ways paid to competitions. They had a support system. They had medical around them, they had science around them.

They had very similar to what we had out in the [Colorado Springs] resident program.” So successful was Cohen’s team that it surpassed football in popularity and income, securing from local voters a one-percent sales tax to build a permanent lifting facility, the largest in the country, to support Team Savannah which claimed 47 national champions, 28 American record holders, and 152 American records by 1997.¹² Citing Cohen’s school-based initiative as a model, Ben Green maintains that “every little town in the United States has a potential world champion in it.” “In the schools,” Denis Reno reiterates, “That’s always the key. Get it into the schools.”¹³

Failing widespread weightlifting presence in the schools, however, recruitment efforts have been, as Jim Schmitz points out, haphazard and unsystematic. “You look at Tommy Kono and Chuck Vinci and all those guys. It was pure luck that they just happened to be near a facility where they could do weightlifting, Tommy from the YMCA and Chuck from John Schubert [in Cleveland] and so many others who just happened to be talented persons who were lucky enough to be around some weightlifting.” Even after the creation of the Colorado Springs training center, “you couldn’t just go out and tap a kid with talent ... and make an Olympic champion.” Recruitment, according to John Coffee, has consisted “mainly of people that come in off the streets. That’s the only way they come in.” Lou DeMarco insists “we really don’t have a recruiting system here at all. It’s by happenstance that we get the lifters we get.” Nor has the dramatic growth of health clubs and number of weight trainees since the 1970s improved the situation. “Many gyms that previously had barbells,” notes Artie Drechsler, “completely abandoned free weights in favor of Nautilus machines, and many new gyms were Nautilus only.” Ben Green recalls that “even back in the day when I came along you could go to almost any YMCA and find a platform, and they didn’t do powerlifting.” It became rare by the 1990s to see a platform or anyone doing overhead lifts with a barbell.

Pete George provides a unique perspective on America’s decline in weightlifting by placing the blame on how competitions are conducted and conveyed to the public. Pete believes,

... the biggest reason there is so little participation in the sport is because it has practically zero spectator appeal. A

contest of human strength certainly should have a lot of appeal, but the way modern weightlifting presents it leaves most spectators bewildered. One of the reasons for this is that there are too many bodyweight classes. This has caused a multitude of problems. It’s almost impossible to stage a local contest in an interesting manner. Very few areas in the US have three good lifters in each class, and if they do, contests last too long. In an effort to speed them up, promoters group some or all of the competitors in a single session. The spectators then have no idea of who is lifting against whom, and what the significance of each lift is in the overall competition. I believe there should be no more than five classes, preferably four (light-140, middle-165, lightheavy-190, and heavy). I know that is radical thinking and has zero chance of being accepted by the controlling powers of international lifting, but I believe it’s the only way lifting in the US can survive.

The beauty of George’s reform proposal is that it meshes so well with America’s consumer culture, which is driven by spectator appeal and ultimately the prospect of cash rewards. Unfortunately it flies in the face of the powers-that-be on the international level who are drawn largely from countries with government-supported programs. When Pete presented his plan to IWF President Tamas Ajan and others he was told that they are concerned about the athletes and not about spectators. “But the primary reason an athlete competes is for the recognition it brings him,” Pete reasoned, “otherwise he’ll just stay in the gym and work out. In other words, the fewer the spectators, the less the sport attracts athletes.” Les Simonton agrees that until weightlifting is conducted in a more professional manner “we’re doomed to poor exposure and doomed to mediocrity.”

This weightlifting version of supply-side economics differs from the traditional European model of success which American leaders have attempted to apply to their faltering programs since the 1970s. Zygmunt Smalcerz, the latest European to enlighten the West on

Eastern ways, explains that his native Poland, even after the breakup of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s, still follows a system that was put in place a half century ago.

We still follow all the things like camps. Like first of all, why we are so good, because we start with what we call identification of talent and selection. We are not waiting if somebody will come for the weightlifting call. We are going forth to reach guys very talented in this school, and we would like to be the first to catch him, and we're providing the competition for him, not with very heavy weights, but we are judging the technique. And this process gives us to discover the most talented, and then we are giving them the fantastic big grant. ... We are thinking about Olympic cycles only, Olympics, worlds, Olympics.

By way of contrast, in the United States there has never been any identification of talent process. "So many football players," says Smalcerz. "They look ready for fantastic weights, but they don't like to be weightlifters because money is everything." Nobody in this country has recognized weightlifting as a "good sport. So what we need to change here is first the identification of the talent."¹⁴ Mike Conroy notes that USA Weightlifting has crossed the 10,000 mark for the first time in its history, "but we're still the smallest NGB in the USOC. ... Look at the power sports in the United States. It's all team sports. And people who do individual sports are looked on as kind of anti-social. The problem with weightlifting is that we use the lifts, but we only use the lifts as they relate back to the athletes of the team sports to get better." Lou DeMarco points out that a country like China, with over a million weightlifters, has no such problem, and even if team sports were more prevalent, the Communist government would insure that they would not draw talent from those sports that could bring Olympic glory and international prestige to the nation.

Rival Alternatives

Carl Miller concurs that "some of our best people go down to other sports, whether it be football or track and field or gymnastics." Jim Schmitz points out that there are "no college scholarships whatsoever for

weightlifting. There are some colleges that have programs where you can go to college and do weightlifting, but it's nothing like for a gymnast or basketball or a swimmer or track and field." Mark Rippetoe asks, "How many schools in the United States offer a weightlifting scholarship? What would a guy with a 36-inch vertical jump do? Throw the shot at the University of Texas or lift weights? He's lifting weights anyway." That the lure to other sports goes beyond the scholastic level is evident to Denis Reno who observes that life is getting easier in America and "lifting is work. And nobody works for nothing any more. ... And of course pay has escalated like crazy in pro sports, so if you're going to pursue a sport, you might as well get paid a lot of money for it, and you know it's not going to be this." Were it not for the attraction of the Olympics, Ben Green believes the sport would cease to exist. "We're never going to be a football sport or anything that can draw, but we can do better. We get the leftovers to start with." Wes Barnett attributes America's lackluster performance in part to so many other distractions that do not exist in Europe.

You win an Olympic medal in weightlifting in Bulgaria as an example, you got a car; you got an apartment, you're knighted or whatever the case may be. ... In this country, the big three, baseball, basketball, football, and still to this day to a large extent, those things dominate, and then you got all the BMX, the ultimate, the extreme sports and whatever. So you got all these competing entities where in Europe and other parts of the world, the Olympics were the end all and be all, and in some cases still is, and if you were an Olympic champion you were famous. And there are weightlifting Olympians throughout the world that have the same type of status as Michael Jordan does in this country.

For Mark Rippetoe neuro-muscular efficiency is critical to becoming a good weightlifter, and athletes with "36 verticals" gravitate to college football, basketball, or track and field. He points out that, "there are avenues of athletic competition for people in all weight classes here that pay better and get more rewards than Olympic

weightlifters.” It is hardly coincidental that as weightlifting declined in the 1970s, most other sports, especially football, were escalating in popularity.

Even among the strength sports weightlifting was losing its attraction to a fast-growing rival sport that required less attention to technique. There were “thousands and thousands of powerlifters,” notes Murray Levin, while at the same time “if you go to a national weightlifting championship, you almost have to pay people to go in. The only people in the audience are the lifters or the coaches or the families.” Gyms and health clubs, another expansion sector in the 1970s, were providing fewer facilities for Olympic lifting. “Many of the owners/managers,” according to Art Drechsler, “made a conscious decision to focus on one or another of the sports when the governance split occurred, shedding facilities for Olympic-style lifting if they chose to focus on powerlifting or bodybuilding as many did.” The United States, he contends, “lost a disproportionate share of ground in this area, with a larger share of its talent pool gravitating to powerlifting than was the case for other nations.” It required a shorter learning curve, he argued, and its rise coincided with the “incorrect perception that powerlifting was a better test of strength.”¹⁵ That powerlifters were stronger and could easily transfer it to Olympic lifting is vehemently denied by John Coffee. “They think that by having done powerlifting and being a world champion they could learn technique in the Olympic lifts and pretty soon be a world class Olympic weightlifter. Of course that’s bullshit.” Terry Todd — who coached Mark Henry during the middle of the 1990s, when Mark held all of the US records in weightlifting while setting national and world records in powerlifting — notes that “back in the ‘60s, when modern powerlifting was born, many people competed in both sports at the same time and did well, with some even winning national championships or setting records in both, like Dave Moyer and Ernie Pickett. As time passed, however, this became less and less common. Even so, a few competitive lifters, like Mark and Jim McCarty have the physical attributes to become very successful in both forms of lifting, but it becomes more and more difficult to excel in both because the standards in both continue to increase. Specialization rules.”

Todd adds that by the end of the 1970s Strongman contests were also beginning to present a further challenge to weightlifting, and to draw many large and powerful men way from the Olympic sport. Another

development that coincided with weightlifting’s decline, and closely correlated with powerlifting’s rise, was the elimination of the press as a competitive lift after 1972. Furthermore, as shown in the first article of this series, the most dramatic drop in American performance in weightlifting vis-à-vis that of other countries occurred during this period. Although Jim Schmitz observes that “Americans love the press” and that its elimination “took away the potential of a lot of our really strong lifters,” there is no consensus that it was detrimental to American lifting fortunes. After all, good pressers or love of the press was by no means unique to the United States. “Maybe slightly” is as far as Gayle Hatch will concede to the press. “I don’t think so,” says Ben Green. “I think it’s a much better sport without it. In fact, I think it helped us.” While Artie Drechsler’s contention that “Americans had more athletes capable of world records in that lift” in 1972 “than in the snatch and C&J” is contradicted by evidence presented in the second article in this series, his more general observation that “that link to the public was diminished” likely has merit.¹⁶ One of the well-known questions asked of weightlifters prior to its elimination, “How much can you press?” was soon replaced by “How much can you bench press?” as powerlifting rose in popularity. That no such effect was prevalent in other countries further underscores the impact of powerlifting. Terry Todd holds that:

One of the reasons many young men were drawn more to powerlifting than to weightlifting in the years following the elimination of the press was that [those] who wanted to be big and strong noticed that powerlifters tended to have larger and more powerful-looking upper bodies than weightlifters had. This was so for two main reasons: 1) the elimination of the press meant that the deltoids of weightlifters were not as thick as they were in the days of [Grigory] Novak, [Jim] Bradford, and [Chuck] Vinci and 2) as powerlifters bench pressed, their pectoral and front deltoid muscles increased in size, and as they began to realize that thicker biceps, triceps, and lats would significantly improve their leverage in the bench they began to do things like curls, triceps presses, and

bent forward rows, which built upper bodies that had the desired "look" — the look of Doug Young, Roger Estep, Bill Kazmaier.

Money

"Everything has to do with money," concludes Tommy Kono. "Weightlifting in the U.S. doesn't attract money like other sports. U.S. is a country for team sport." What American weightlifting is lacking, agrees Denis Reno, is "money and the press and peer pressure." Zygmunt Smalcerz cites how "big money" funneled by governments into the programs and lifters of predominantly socialist countries has produced spectacular results.

Some of them, like for instance Alexeev, broke 69 world records. He was very wealthy guy, very wealthy. Each world record was total 500 rubles. One ruble was bigger than one dollar. He was in the media. Everybody watched what was going on. Big money. In Russia and Poland as well. When someone broke world record immediately money, money, money. Money, and weightlifters was free of work because the money was bigger, and each of them was able to lift without going three or four or six or eight hours of daily work. ... We need to choose somebody who will be able to put something with money in this federation. We need bigger money to support this to give stipends.

Gayle Hatch, however, points out administrators have discussed ideas about paying good lifters as much as \$24,000 per year to facilitate their training, "but we have no lifters out there. That would be wasted money now. Kendrick Farris didn't improve one kilo on his total from the last Olympics." Les Simonton suggests a unique approach to kick-start the program. "I've often wondered if we could put up some money like in a trust. Here's a million dollars. You win a gold medal in the Olympics and you get that, 500 thousand for a silver."¹⁷ Such capitalist ideas implemented in the 1970s might have forestalled American decline, but rules against professionalism were rigidly enforced, except in socialist

countries where it was practiced under the aegis of governmental regulation of sports. In essence, American amateur weightlifters were pitted against professionals from rival countries. By the time professionals were allowed in the Olympics in 1988, the quality of American athletes and their ability to attract corporate money into the sport had deteriorated to a point that recovery, even in the world's richest economy, seemed hopeless. As Jim Schmitz readily remarks, "it goes down to the fact that the rest of the world has really taken weightlifting seriously and professionally, and we're still fully amateur."

A Marketing Issue

According to Mike Conroy, lack of change can be attributed to weightlifting being "a groundhog sport. We pop up every four years, put the superheavyweights on TV and then we disappear again. So there's a marketing issue. ... I've been involved at the national level for 22 years, and ... we're fighting the same fight we did the day I showed up." He recalls when Mary Lou Retton won the gold medal in 1984 there were over a million phone calls to US Gymnastics which "saved gymnastics." But when Tara Nott won a gold medal in weightlifting in 2000 "we couldn't capitalize it." Mur-



Jim Schmitz, left, produced many national champions during his long career as a gym owner and weightlifting coach, and Denis Reno, right, served U.S. Weightlifting during the mid-70s as the National Coaching Coordinator, and since 1969 has published as a labor of love the invaluable *Denis Reno's Weightlifting Newsletter* for an astonishing 47 years.

ray Levin attributes America's decline to the lack of a publicity medium. When *Strength & Health* "went out every month, there were a hundred thousand copies and everybody knew about weightlifting. Everybody knew who the heroes were. Everybody knew who Schemansky was, and Gubner was, and Knipp was, and Kono was. They knew everything about the sport." Levin remembers receiving a call one day in the mid-1980s from John Terpak, who was "almost like a father to me, saying 'Murray, I hate to tell you this, but we're gonna stop the magazine.' I said, 'Johnny, that's gonna cause the death of US weightlifting,' and that's exactly what happened. People didn't know anything about the sport anymore." From that point Joe Weider's bodybuilding magazines had a free reign over the iron game. "*Strength & Health* had an unbelievably universal effect," concurs Denis Reno. "You can't imagine how many people received that thing." Gayle Hatch "couldn't wait for *Strength & Health* to come each month."

Bruce Klemens believes the "one main reason" for "losing our critical mass" is the lack of any publicity medium for weightlifting.

We are less and less of the iron game pie than ever before. And we don't have a newsstand publication because there's not enough people to read it. In the old days Weider and his bodybuilding magazines had a weightlifting article or two by Al Murray or somebody. Now if you look at any bodybuilding magazine there's nothing at all about Olympic lifting, and it's almost worse than [if they were] against Olympic lifting. They ignore it altogether. It's like we're irrelevant. And so if you pick up a newsstand publication, you don't even know we exist.

Here's another issue I have with even an internet publication or whatever USA Weightlifting puts out. They've lost all of the personalization of any sort of training routines. You know what I mean. In the fifties, sixties, and seventies, you'd read about how Tommy Kono trains or here's how Schemansky trains, and you could get a little hero worship.

You want to be like them, so you studied their training routines. Now any time I see the federation put anything out, it's just some generic percentage-based thing, and you have none of that personalization. I couldn't tell you specifically how the good lifters over the past two decades trained because they never published any articles. ... You don't see that personalization which to me is very important to motivate people.

Personalization was also a key factor for John Coffee, who observes that "a lot of kids grow up wanting to be like Jim Brown or Wilt Chamberlain or something, and it's mainly from seeing those people...it's the media, either TV or newspapers, the magazines, or whatever it is, and they identify with the personalities they see of these people. But there's nobody like that in weightlifting." Coffee cites the example of when women's world champion Robin Byrd [Goad] was "doing very well, I don't think anybody out at the [Olympic] training center lifted a finger to try to get her any publicity."

Administrative Shortcomings

Clearly a consensus exists that much of the blame for America's weightlifting decline is due to administrative failings. As a general axiom, notes Carl Miller, as more emphasis is placed on bureaucracy, less attention is devoted to delivering a coaching and strength training system. "And that's where their emphasis is." Mike Stone holds the board of directors responsible for micromanaging and mismanaging the sport, especially in the critical area of sports science where its performance has been "abysmal."

In USA Weightlifting it's been basically the same as it was when I started, the same people. They play different roles. A few people have died off. But basically you get many of the same people doing the weightlifting that you did forty years ago, and that can be a problem. Put it this way. If you do the same things you have always done, you'll get the same results. ... They need some new blood in there. They need to let the people they hire in the office have more

control. And over the years they've hired some people that were pretty good managers and entrepreneurs and had some really good ideas but were stifled in trying to bring those ideas to fruition. ... If the board would act like a more typical board and back off and let the people in the office have more control over what goes on, I think weightlifting would be in better shape.

Denis Reno recalls a time in the late 1980s when USA Weightlifting was well administered by George Greenaway, an Air Force retiree who managed the office in Colorado Springs.¹⁸ “He organized us. We told him what we sort of wanted and an idea of what had to be done, and he did it. ... He gave us structure. We have no structure whatsoever in our federation now.” Les Simonton reflects that “until 2008 the board of directors was something like 90% coaches, and most of those had special interests, their own kids to a large degree. Some of them were very well meaning, but there was nobody there who knew how to produce things, and certainly so far as running businesses, the organization just wasn’t run very much like a business.” A “them and us” atmosphere seemed to prevail that extended to the resident athletes at Colorado Springs whom Ben Green calls “the fair-haired boys.” By the end of the eighties, Green said, “we all felt like outsiders. And when we’d go to the nationals, it was us against them. It always was. We hated them, and they hated us. They didn’t like me, and they didn’t like John Coffee.” Perhaps the harshest criticism leveled at USA Weightlifting officials, however, comes from Mark Rippetoe who regards them as fools. “They’re fools in everything they do. They don’t know how to run an organization. ... This is the smallest NGB in the USOC and the worst NGB as far as I’m concerned. USA Weightlifting is just a joke organization.”

Murray Levin attributes much of America’s decline to the board’s decision following his departure to mimic the Europeans. After the windfall of the 1984 Olympics, he explains, “we invested our money wisely. Still they wanted to bring in foreign coaches, and I always said, and Tommy [Kono] always said, that was the death of American weightlifting. When they started to bring in foreign influence, we sort of lost the spark, and that’s when the sport started to go down.” Levin notes that only the women’s and master’s programs

flourished after he left in 1988. Whether foreign influences — namely the hiring of Australian Lyn Jones as National Coaching Director and Romanian Dragomir Cioroslan as Resident Coach — were significantly detrimental to a program that had already been faltering for two decades is debatable, but other administrative irregularities plagued the sport. According to Denis Reno, weightlifting chafes under the control of the USOC constitution and bylaws, and as he says, the

USOC finances 70% or more of our programs. We’re regimented in. We have all the little structures, but we don’t know what in the hell we’re doing. We have lousy managers. All of our people are free [volunteers] that run our things. We’re not going to get the greatest managers. They’re managing and making money for someone else. ... You get what you pay for. And we have no specific weightlifting people employed in Colorado Springs. They’re all administrators. I mean our best thing is Laurie Lopez.

Mike Conrad, National Coaching Coordinator at Colorado Springs, who does come from a weightlifting background, recognizes a lack of centralization and uniformity of coaching efforts with so many individual coaches throughout the country with their own egos and vested interests in the sport.¹⁹ “The only thing we can do is try to create a dialogue. Bringing everyone together and changing the culture is a matter of survival.”²⁰ To Harvey Newton, who expresses the same frustration, “it seems to be impossible to get the parties of weightlifting on the same page. I don’t know whether it’s bitter jealousies. I don’t know what it is.”

But administrative problems extend far beyond USA Weightlifting, as was obvious to Jim Lorimer who brought together a blue-ribbon panel of fifteen leading lights of the strength world in November 2012 to make reform proposals.²¹ That weightlifting’s new Executive Director (Michael Massik) was absent that day, that the Chief of Sport Operations and NGB Relations at the USOC (Rick Adams) attended only briefly, and that the Chair of USA Weightlifting’s Board of Directors (Drechsler) was only available by telephone did not augur well. The result of the committee’s all-day meeting was a

report submitted to Drechsler and Massik with recommendations for reform under four headings.²² "There was a lot of optimism and a lot of thought about how we could get recruitment going and the like, but at the USOC level there's just no support and no drive and no leadership," lamented Lorimer. "I tried to give them a track to run on, and they didn't run."²³ Jim Schmitz discerns a major obstacle to American advancement on the international level. "The Communist Eastern Europeans have controlled weightlifting, and so they don't want the US to have any power or influence because it would weaken them," hence their aversion to television publicity. "You see Thomas Ajan didn't care about the world championships or the Olympics making too big of a splash because if you got too big of a splash, people with money and influence would weaken his power. It would knock him out." Whether there's an Eastern European Weightlifting Mafia — or outright corruption of the sort that recently created a firestorm within international track and field, as some insiders suppose — has yet to be documented. But Mike Stone notes that "everyone tells me in talking particularly to Eastern Europeans, that they immediately recognized politics of the sport and made concerted efforts to take over those politics and to get themselves placed highly. And if you look at weightlifting, it's been run by Thomas Ajan for years and years and years. I think they are quite right in recognizing a political structure here." Stone's point is that this structure enabled the Eastern bloc to get rules put in that would favor their side, especially in the critical area of drug testing. How well any "Eastern European Mafia" will ultimately withstand the challenge from Asia remains to be seen, but neither result will bode well for the United States, which has not had its way on the international political stage since the days when Bob Hoffman pulled Clarence Johnson's strings and Oscar State was the General Secretary of the IWF.

Democracy or Discipline?

Any correlation between the democratization and decline of American lifting during the 1970s and 1980s must also be examined. What Carl Miller "kept hearing from Colorado Springs was just the plain lack of discipline out there. And the board of directors would not back the national coach, like Harvey Newton or Dragomir. When Harvey was out there he didn't get the backing he should because it takes a lot of hard discipline and training. So that's a big thing, the lack of dis-

cipline. For a while Colorado Springs was a playland." It was during the regime of Murray Levin in the 1970s and 1980s that the athletes, led by Artie Drechsler, gained a major voice in the administration of American weightlifting.

"They had double votes in the voting process," Murray recalls, "and after a while it started to show because in the late eighties they were controlling the coaches, what trips they were going on. They

carried a lot of weight, and I saw that was becoming a problem internationally. ... I lift for me, not my country" became the prevailing attitude. That trend has continued, according to Wes Barnett. "Now we're in a place where the athletes are calling the shots that they want for the majority of the national level competitions. They're the ones saying, 'I want this, I want this, I want this.'" The Eastern Europeans, on the other hand, are told what to lift. According to Barnett, "They're doing it from a strategic point. They're not thinking what do I need to do to win medals. The Eastern Europeans and everywhere else are told this is what you go out and lift." Jim Schmitz agrees that the Eastern Europeans would never allow athletes to have so many "rights," and maintains that American coaches, "give the athletes too much choice. ... [In] the countries that do the best, the athletes there are just athletes, and based on their performance, and they don't have a vote on their starting attempts or what weight class they're going to lift in. They are told what they are going to do. They're even told to take their drugs."



Jim Lorimer directed the 1970 World Weightlifting Championships in Columbus, Ohio, and then formed a partnership with Arnold Schwarzenegger that resulted in what is now known as the Arnold Sports Festival. Over the past half-century, Lorimer has remained a concerned fan of American weightlifting and, in 2012, he decided to sponsor a summit on weightlifting's doldrums, bringing together fifteen strength-sport specialists to brainstorm solutions in Colorado Springs.

The efficacy of coach control over athletes even holds true in the United States, according to Mike Stone, citing track and field, swimming, and gymnastics as prime examples.

The sports we do well at the world level come out of colleges. Now let's take a look at what they do in colleges. The athletes don't get to pick and choose their training program. They don't get to pick and choose sometimes their roommates. They have to go to bed. These are the rules. You can have various authoritarian coaches. You can have less authoritarian coaches. All of those coaches have done well at one time or another, but they all have rules. I don't know any coach anywhere that doesn't have rules, that just allows the athletes to do whatever they want nor do I know any country that allows athletes to do what they want to and it works. And it certainly doesn't work in college. That conclusion has been arrived at after years and years of observation. But there are actually studies showing that you don't do as well [if they let] you do whatever you want to do.

Not all interviewees, however, were critical of Drechsler's athletes' rights agenda during the 1970s and 1980s. "I believe in the democratic way," states Lou DeMarco. "In my philosophy, I always put the kids first." Formerly, he recalls, "they were trying to be too controlling of the athletes as far as what they should lift and so on. And there were those in the administration who treated the athletes like second-class citizens which was very discouraging." Nevertheless DeMarco recognizes that the most successful programs in the world have been authoritarian and that "we're somewhat lacking in discipline. If you go into some places where there's a lot of lifters, top level lifters, they're on their cell phones, they're listening to music on the ipads, ipods, and all this stuff, screwing around, and that's not good. When you're at the gym you gotta take care of business."

The most subtle form of discipline was that which Zygmunt Smalcerz was exposed to in Poland where his coach established a training protocol that

enabled lifters to discipline themselves. "Each category had a minimum of two good lifters," he recalls. "In Poland we were so good in the 67 category that we had [Waldemar] Baszanowski, [Marian] Zielinski, and [Zbigniew] Kaczmarek on the same platform, very close to each other every day. Coach had nothing to do. He was watching. And sometimes he would come to Baszanowski, 'did you see him? Did you see him, Baszanowski, what he did?' Sometimes 'come on, give me this. Come on.' It was fantastic." Thus discipline was not imposed but came from the lifters themselves in the form of mini-competitions each training day.²⁴ Bob Hoffman was frequently criticized for exercising a heavy hand over picking coaches, lifters, and lifts. "But it worked" is the response of Gayle Hatch who recognizes that it was the "same thing" that was so successfully utilized by the authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe.²⁵

A Systematic Approach

What American weightlifters were not doing to keep up with the world, however, is only half the story. It was not so much the USA's decline as its stagnation or "relative decline" while the world was moving ahead. Mike Conroy feels the biggest difference between the United States and European and Asian countries is that the latter adopted a systematic approach to training.

There's a system. You plug those people into it, and it tiers up. And they have that long-term athletic development. So if they take a kid at age twelve, they have a plan for them. Now the problem Americans have, and Vern Gambetta said this, 'when you really look at how it's done, you have to learn to train, you have to train to train, you have to train to compete, and then you can train to win.' We Americans have a hell of a time with that. We want to win right off the bat, regardless of the age group. You know this when you look at the attrition rates from youth sports to high school sports. The biggest problem for us is once you leave your club there's no place to go in college. We're lucky if we can get into the rec rooms, much less get into the athletic facility. We've had discussions and discussions with college

*strength programs, and there's the liability issue if you allow a weightlifter to go into the weight room. Now you've opened up the athletic room to every club sport you have on campus. ... In other words, what we want to do is start developing an American system of weightlifting which means that patience is going to have to drive everything we do.*²⁶

Even the Colombians and other Latin American countries have a system modeled after the success of Eastern Europeans, observes Harvey Newton. "They have a system that's equivalent to an old phys. ed. teacher who would know if he sees someone who has some talent for weightlifting. He would push them in a certain direction and get them to somebody who could help them. We obviously do not have anything similar to that. We're still in an all-comers type of approach to the sport." Denis Reno credits the dictatorial regimes in the Soviet Union and its satellites for creating a weightlifting infrastructure. First you "gotta have a coaching program" with coaches trained in "scientific methods that have proven to work. You gotta get the thoroughbreds in there. That's what we're not getting." In recent decades the Chinese have adopted the system. "They send somebody to schools in the country and identify people. You can easily identify people who are great potential athletes. ... I don't know how they do it, but you know the government has a system, and you listen to the government."

America's two European coaches explain how the Communist systems developed. Zygmunt Smalcerz points out that Polish weightlifting began in the early 1950s when Russian lifters visited Poland "to let us know what weightlifting is." Soon Fedor Bogdanovsky, middleweight gold medalist in 1956, was assigned as an adviser who became "like a Polish national coach" and traveled throughout the country and established a system of clubs modeled on those that existed in the Soviet Union. Smalcerz, who came from a poor family, joined one of these clubs in his teens as a gymnast before his potential in weightlifting was recognized. There he was exposed to the elaborate Russian system of scientific institutes, training camps, and sports medicine, all of which were replicated in Poland and other Communist countries.²⁷ Russian scientists at state-funded institutes

produced numerous books and articles on weightlifting. Smalcerz recalled that "They gave plenty of fantastic remarks on what to do, and immediately the coaches were able to implement all of this knowledge to our training. This was very important to putting results higher and higher." Another important component, he claims, was the

big support from medicine, because all this team was surrounded with very important doctors, knowledgeable doctors, and many massage men. If the team was big, we had two massage men. Every day you were able to get thirty, forty-five minutes of massage. Massage, fantastic medicine and physiotherapies. Big support, big support. Doctor was watching only for what to give, what to do, what to give to recover. It was fantastic. The doctor was more important than the coach sometimes. Today they are using knowledge we get from your one drop of blood. They test it and see what you need.

Periodic three-week camps organized by the clubs provided the opportunity for the most intensive utilization of these opportunities, according to Smalcerz.

During the camps the nutrition and everything was much better because they were able to prepare very good food and good quality of this food. It was like a big supper. So I was dreaming to go to these camps because of the food. What did we need to do? I'll need to train, to eat, to rest, nothing [else]. Fantastic. Sometimes we get some free day to go to interesting places. I was able to travel to the old Poland without money. Everything was without money. Club would pay every kind of cost. It was like a privileged position all of the time. It was like a kind of freedom.

In return for these privileges, Smalcerz continues, the lifters were expected to be "ready every day for very heavy training." He was lifting a total of 25 tons in the

morning and 35 tons in the afternoon for a total of 60 tons or 120,000 pounds per day. "It was like impossible to do it," he recalls, "but I was working like a machine. Every day it was fantastic. I was able to do, every day bigger, fantastic." The system was really working, he believes, and continues to work in Poland even after the collapse of Communism. His prescription is "First choose the very talented, then give them everything. Support every day. Support from medicine, from everything, proper eating, everything."

Dragomir Cioroslan attributes his rise from meager beginnings in Romania to elite status to the "systematic methodological smart training process" he endured. It was a more intense training regimen that he brought to the United States in 1990 as national coach. He increased the number of repetitions from five thousand to 18-20 thousand [per year], "because everything else

besides that is irrelevant in respect to contribution to the sport, other than health issues. The athletes were willing to commit to that, and they found that it resulted in the other major shift in their attitude, their behavior. That this volume of work, although overwhelming, made them all national record holders" marked a start to bringing up medals on the international level. Dragomir's holistic approach reflected his Eastern European origins.

So my first challenge was a cultural shift in attitude with respect to what it takes. It takes a much more disciplined effort than I observed and found on the ground. It takes much more focus. It takes a much more determined and committed effort. It takes a much harder effort with respect to complexity, inten-



In 1996 the United States fielded its last full ten-man team at an Olympic Games. Following the Atlanta Games, the IOC instituted a qualifying standard for Olympic eligibility as a way to limit the number of participants. In 2012 we sent our smallest group ever to an Olympic Games as only one man and two women met the required standard and competed in London. The 1996 team members were: Bottom row: Coach Dragomir Cioroslan, Bryan Jacob, Vernon Patao, Thanh Nguyen, and Coach Leo Totten. Second row: Trainer Charles Piba, Pete Kelley, Tim McCrae, Tom Gough, and Dennis Snethen. Third row: Tom Ingalsbe, Konstantine Starikovitch, Mark Henry, and Wes Barnett.

sity, technicality, and of course additional resources from outside brought into the training process to ensure recovery, better health, avoiding injuries, and ensure progress towards targets that are methodologically set and accomplished in a logical manner with tools of the modern training process. That includes sports science, biomechanical analysis of the technique, transfer of that analysis and efficiency modeling into the individual technique of the athlete. Psychological aspects, motivation, focus, determination, blocking out distractions and all that in order to maximize the potential of the athlete on a daily basis — emotional, physical, psychological and intellectual. And then we had of course exercise physiology, the medical science. What they contribute in supporting and enhancing recovery of the athlete's body after the intense training.

Many of the training aids Smalcerz and Cioroslan utilized as athletes were also implemented under the latter at Colorado Springs, according to his protégé, Wes Barnett — the science, the medicine, the physiology, the nutrition — but many lifters there were unable to withstand the intensity of the training program. Unlike Barnett, who had a solid foundation under his previous coach, Dennis Snethen, in St. Joseph, Missouri, others could not withstand the “punishment” Cioroslan was “dishing out in his programs.” Barnett recalled that many “could not handle it, and we were just going through a lot of athletes with injuries and non-improvement, and they would just kind of leave, and new guys would come in. So Dragomir eventually had to adjust his program.” Barnett concludes that, unlike the Americans, the Eastern Europeans were full-time professionals in their sport ... paid by their government to lift weights full-time.”

To Lou DeMarco, “we’re still training like in the stone age.” In great part Harvey Newton attributes that deficiency to “more advanced scientific knowledge coming from the Soviet bloc countries versus the relative absence of scientific work being done in this country.” Furthermore, [Newton] holds that American efforts

have resulted in the appearance of a system without the substance.

They criticized Hoffman for running a monopoly. They criticized the AAU for running a monopoly. They said we need to have a training center which we got. And they said we had to have some coaches from which we have created a community of weightlifting coaches. That has not done us any good. ... Weightlifting's basically acknowledging now that they have more certified coaches than they have athletes. I knew this was coming. This is a huge cash cow for them to run these programs. ... I'm willing to bet 95% don't give a hoot about weightlifting. They just want to say they're a certified coach. They are not coaching athletes. Most of them have never seen a meet. Most of them don't intend to see a meet.

The former Soviet bloc countries have systematically set the standard too high, maintains Bruce Klemens. “We have now gotten to that stage in Olympic lifting, unless you’re training six times a day, six times a week, two times a day or whatever, you can’t compete.” What enabled the Bulgarians to reach such a high standard, as Les Simonton recognizes, was early recruitment and training programs, “so by the time lifters were in their teens it was old hat. It was ingrained. Anything you teach someone who’s really young, the book type learning or something physical, they’ll retain it to a high degree.”²⁸ To some extent this more systematic approach has existed within the NCAA, Klemens points out. “You make it worth someone’s while to go out and look for talent and develop talent and make it interesting for the talent to migrate toward the sport or desire potential money.” But weightlifting long ago, at least by the 1970s, abandoned that option.

Strength vs. Technique

At the center of the debate over what made Eastern European weightlifters so superior to the Americans are the types of training methods they employed. For Zygmunt Smalcerz, drawing on the experience of his athletic career, the acquisition of strength was a second-

ary consideration. "At first the basic is technique. We take care about the quality, not weights. Then bigger weights of course after time. First of all technique, secondary beautiful speed, flexibility, jumping, and explosiveness." Mike Conroy, agreeing with the wisdom of Smalcerz, also believes "it is technique. Strength helps, but technique is skill. You can pull the bar at the speed of light, but if it's going in the wrong direction, it's not going to happen. It comes down to grip, stance, and position. If you do it right, you'll get stronger in doing it right, but if you get strength in front of the technique, the strength will stall out because the bar is going the wrong way." Gayle Hatch, who studied the technique employed by the Russians and other countries, concluded that it was far superior to that of the Americans. "Absolutely, no question about it. One time when we started out you just pulled the bar straight up instead of getting it into the power position and bringing the hips forward and up — the double knee bend." According to Harvey Newton, American lifters and coaches had difficulty accepting this principle.

I remember Morris Weissbrot and Rudy Sablo gave a clinic in 1974. I went and listened, and they said, bounce this off your thighs. Well that's at a time when Carl Miller is saying 'no.' There's all sorts of subtle things going on with centers of pressure on the foot, and the joints have to be re-bending and getting into a stronger position in order to create more vertical force. Here's Carl Miller saying this in 73-74 and being shunned by many for what he's saying, and there's still a huge movement in this country and in the UK who hate the term double-knee bend. We had a huge disconnect during that period of time. When I was national coach I was on enough trips and talked with enough of our guys to know they didn't understand how the bar really gets overhead in the most efficient manner.

According to Carl Miller, "you've got to have leverage, and leverage is always more important than strength. So you've got to have technique to hit those leverage positions. But if you don't have strength you're not going to

go anywhere." He believes the Eastern Europeans used a combination of technique and strength, first mastering the technique and then getting stronger.

Jim Lorimer, however, believes strength furnishes the basic raw material for performing the lifts. "We've got men in this country who are ferociously strong," and following Bob Hoffman's example, USA Weightlifting just needs to "identify and train them. I think strength is going to win. We can't succeed because we haven't made a commitment to get the strongest men anywhere near the sport. They just continue to do eight-hundred-pound bench presses and one-thousand-pound deadlifts. If you can deadlift one thousand, you ought to be able to clean and jerk five hundred." From a scientific standpoint, Mike Stone believes "it's definitely strength" that's critical, citing studies showing no difference in technique between regional and elite lifters.

You can't find a hill of beans difference in technique. But you find a big difference in strength. ... There's a paper out showing that if you watch the same level of lifter, they won't do the same thing two times in a row, exactly the same or basically the same. But there's a slight difference. And there's a paper coming out showing world records, and the lifters all have slightly different techniques. So is technique important? Absolutely. But there's a basic technique. Nobody can do perfect technique every time. They're just not built that way. If they used the same technique every time, they ought to be able to lift the same weight every time, if that was the primary factor. How do you overcome that? Strength. What a lot of people don't realize is that there are a lot of things that come with strength. As you get stronger, rate of force development goes up, output goes up, and on down the line. If you look at biomechanical studies there are very few differences between lifters in terms of their technique. The better lifters produce more force during the lift. The bar is moving faster, and they get under it faster. How can they do that? Not because of basic



As the years have passed, sports scientists such as Dr. Mike Stone, an exercise physiologist, have played an increasing role in the production of elite weightlifters in many countries in the modern world. Men like Stone, who has practical experience as both a competitive lifter and a coach, are especially helpful.

technique. It's because they're exerting more force. It goes back to Newton's second law, force equals mass times acceleration. So if you can accelerate things faster, you perform better.

It was obvious to Mark Rippetoe that the program he was taught at the Olympic Training Center in 1989 did not have a direct strength component. "If you don't have the advantage of demographics to build your program out of, which we don't, then instead of relying on strength to wander in the door, you had better be prepared to build it, and we're not." Some people are naturally stronger than others, he points out, and US athletes who are "just freaky strong" end up somewhere else. "Weightlifting consists of the snatch, the clean, and the jerk," he reminds us.

It's not judo. It's not downhill skiing. It's the snatch, the clean, and the jerk, done with the same barbell on the same platform under exactly the same conditions essentially, every time they're practiced, and every time you compete. The bar is laying on the floor, and you do three things with the God-damn thing. You snatch, you clean, and you jerk. First the coaching regime in the United States cannot even tell you what they consider to be good technique.

They haven't quantified it. And second, if there is such a thing as good technique, how long does it take an athlete to perfect technique on three movements that take half a second apiece with the same equipment, under the same circumstances every single time ... Good technique means you throw the bar up in as vertical a line as you can make and catch it overhead.

Coaches, says Rippetoe, "want to pretend like weightlifting is gymnastics with a barbell, and if that were true then style points would be awarded." On the contrary, it's the guy who lifts the most weights who wins. He cites Leonid Tarenenko's 266 kilogram (585 pound) clean and jerk, the heaviest in history. "It was done because the man was really, really strong which made up for the technique mess that that lift was." Quite simply "everyone that beats us internationally is stronger than we are."

Bruce Klemens disagrees that American lifters put too much emphasis on technique and not getting stronger. "That's nonsense. Every reputable coach I know of trains strength as well as technique. ... I would say as far as emphasizing strength vs. technique, we're doing the same as the rest of the world does. We're all training the same." Ben Green, however, who had the opportunity to observe foreign lifters in the warm-up room at world championships, was "just amazed at what some of these guys can do. And not only are they strong, but they're fast. Bam, bam, bam, and they can take it. ... We don't train like those guys," he concluded.

Terry Todd believes that just as the bodies of individuals vary widely in terms of their suitability for elite weightlifting,

Anyone who's paid close attention to high levels of weightlifting knows that the body types of lifters vary considerably — and not just in size. Even men who train using the same or a similar training program can become champi-

ons and still have very different body types. For example, during the mid-1900s Olympic champions Ibrahim Shams and Khadr El-Touni were both Egyptians and both world record holders although Shams was very thin and El-Touni was very heavily muscled. Both used the split style. In more modern times, of course, the squat style is king and the technique of lifting is much more consistent and better understood. Even so, it seems apparent that the experienced top lifters from the most successful countries feel the need to maintain their motor control by constant practice. I remember reading somewhere that the late violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz once said, 'If I don't practice for one day, I know it; if I don't practice for two days, the critics know it; if I don't practice for three days, the public knows it.'

Drugs

Whence comes such strength, speed, and intensity? Virtually all interviewees agree that beginning in the middle of the twentieth century drugs played a significant role in the growing differential between the United States and the world. Bob Crist, who was national chairman in the early 1970s when drug testing became an international issue, facetiously asks, "why can't we be like the Europeans and have coaches and labs to help beat the test?" Former IWF Vice President Wolfgang Peter once told him, "if you have a race horse, you don't take him unless he's medically ready," the implication being that European authorities would not use a lifter unless they knew he could pass the test, knowing full well he was vulnerable from using drugs. The US, on the other hand, clamped down." Zygmunt Smalcerz remembers when drugs became a significant factor at the 1972 Olympics, in which the Bulgarians beat the Soviet team for the first time. "It was a big surprise." Likewise at the 1973 world championships in Cuba he watched the Bulgarians squat very heavy weights in training. One of them in the 60 kilo class squatted an "impossible" 230 kilos at a time when Poland's best lifter, Waldemar Baszanowski, was only able to squat 210 kilos in the 67 kilo class. Smalcerz retired before testing was introduced in 1976, but he observed how Russia and Poland

set up laboratories, experimental procedures, and pre-testing protocols to determine optimal times and conditions for athletes to compete. "It was secret, top secret, only for the knowledge of leaders in the Ministry of Sport." Their object was to beat the tests. "It was like a system." At the so-called Alternative Olympics at Varna in 1984, however, where 25 world records were set, there was no need for a system, Smalcerz recalled, since the officials "threw all of the samples into the Black Sea." Fortuitously, Lee James, America's brightest star of the 1970s, also benefitted from a similar lapse in testing protocol at the 1976 Olympics, according to Ben Green. "He [James] said, 'as soon as I lifted Smitty [Dick Smith] grabbed me and said, 'Let's go.' And I left. So they didn't test me.'" Artie Drechsler recalls that the USA made "a conscious decision to get very serious about drug testing in the mid-1980s." It was a time when "many countries were complying with international requirements to the smallest extent possible. ... While this resulted in effectively cleaning up the sport in the US, it left US lifters at a relative disadvantage particularly when competition testing was not very sensitive, and athletes could take performance enhancing substances until just days before the event and still be 'clean' for the tests."

At the 1983 Pan American Games in Caracas Dr. Manfred Donike from Germany introduced a more advanced testing procedure that resulted in a walk-out of some members of the American track and field team; eleven weightlifters, including one American, were caught by the testing. And at the Seoul Games in 1988 the Bulgarian weightlifting team withdrew after two disqualifications in the lightest bodyweight classes, which are always the first to compete. Although Murray Levin agrees with John Terpak that "it takes more than little funny pills to lift heavy weights," by this time "the morale was gone. They just weren't training as hard as some of those guys over there." It was a cat and mouse game. "They got better steroids," according to Carl Miller. "To me steroids were originally an easy ball game. Take a carboxyl group off of a benzene ring and put it somewhere else and it's undetectable. Then testing got more sophisticated, but the Europeans kept on beating the ball game. And we more or less tried to do a non-drug program. And to me that was one of the biggest differences." Lou DeMarco and most others believe steroids produce a minimum of ten percent increase in performance, enough to win medals and set world

records. Although he concurs with Tommy Kono, who says “the fact that you don’t make progress has nothing to do with the fact that they’re taking drugs,” DeMarco believes “that has a lot to do with their winning.” Mike Conroy has had

a lot of sports scientists tell me that anything that can be achieved with drugs, 90% of that can be achieved without drugs. But it takes longer because you’ve got to be more patient. You realize we go the Olympic Games, and the country that’s using drugs snatches 200 kilos, and we snatch 90% of that, 180, we’re in the B session. So you’re not on the podium and in the end being on the podium is still what drives what goes on. I would say that we’re about at that level.

Conroy was told, without naming countries, that cheating was “all part of the program,” and when American weightlifters get caught it is “because they’re not getting assistance from the NGB to control what’s going on with the tests.” He was also told “if we wanted to, we could keep our athletes healthy, we could improve their performance, but we could only beat the test on a percentage ratio. So we would have failures every now and then.” The United States could not afford failures, however, because they would show up in the press.

Arguably the best example of the impact of drugs was the meteoric rise of Bulgaria in the 1970s under its famous coach Ivan Abadjiev, known for his brutal style of coaching — intensity, volume, anabolic drugs, and maximum weights virtually all the time. Jim Schmitz argues, however, that “Abadjiev’s training methods were probably no stricter than Bear Bryant’s, the famous football coach. You know what they do, their philosophy is train the dickens out of them, and if they don’t break we got a champion. If they break, too bad. They play the numbers game.” Terry Todd recalls “watching with absolute disbelief the Bulgarian team in 1983 under Abadjiev’s iron rule doing seven different training sessions — with a complete cool-down between each one on several consecutive days — during which a number of the men lifted weights on each day that were at or above the current world records. Over 30 years later I read world champion and world record holder

Valentin Kristov’s autobiography detailing the way in which Abadjiev manipulated the teenager with respect to both training volume and drug use. Wes Barnett recalls international meets,

where I’ve had athletes bring garbage bags, literally garbage bags full of pill bottles with Dianabol, wanting to sell to us whatever they’ve been provided. Maybe they take some, maybe they save some, and over time they’ve got this giant supply that they’re trying to sell. ... I’ve also been told by some of my friends I’ve developed over the years in the international world that ‘look, if you want to be clean and never win a medal, that’s your problem.’ These are world and Olympic champions telling me this. I had another one tell me, ‘if you even want to dream of stepping up on the podium you have to take something. Otherwise you have no chance.’ And this is a guy who had won three Olympic gold medals. Again it’s the whole system. When you are taking drugs and you’re going six or seven days a week and two or three times a day in training sessions, obviously you’re going to see the effect you’re going to have. Really it’s recovery more than it is the strength because you’re able to do more because you can recover. So when you aren’t doing it under the guise of medical scientists and professionals in a systematic way, you’re just kind of on your own ... and you really don’t know what you’re doing or what dosage or any of this kind of stuff. You’re at a huge disadvantage.

Mike Stone credits the Eastern Europeans and the old Soviet Union for having “really good sports science programs” in the 1970s. “They got a big head start on everybody. ... There’s no doubt that our lifters took drugs at that time, but ours was more of a hit and miss proposition compared to what was going on in some other countries.” It was not that these countries had a genetic advantage or some secret knowledge about training as it was a “program of concerted effort on ergogenic aids.

I believe that because I've talked to the people. I've seen the results. ... Our athletes were getting tested a lot. The athletes in other countries were not. When they started taking drugs they were able to do things they couldn't do before — not only lift more but train harder, I mean much harder and stand up to it.”

It seems obvious to Mark Rippetoe that a change in America's steroid policy would do much to level the playing field. “We all got the same drugs. Everybody has the same drugs and availability. What we have different is a national organization that is determined to be clean at the expense of winning. And nobody else is encumbered with that burden. They don't care if we place thirty-fifth as long as no one tests positive.” John Coffee observes that the Colorado Springs training center “may be the only place in the world where Olympic weightlifters train and are kept, but they're not taking drugs. Who would have a damn training facility and spend all that money to produce weightlifting champions without using drugs? The rest of the world has enough sense not to do that. Until there is a fool-proof way of testing to see if people are chemically enhanced, and as long as we're as stringent about it in this country, we won't win any more medals.” Another interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed the opinion that “I know these guys are better than us. No matter what we take and they wouldn't take, they'd still beat us.” Terry Todd agrees that the type of serious drug testing done in the US as well as other primarily western countries is only part of the reason we've done so poorly over the last few decades, saying,

In the '60s through the '90s, before the fall of the Berlin wall and the regime change in so many eastern bloc countries, the selection process arguably played a larger role in their superiority on the platform than the drugs did. After that time the standard of lifting around the world began to fall back, and it's no accident that the all-time records in the superheavyweight snatch and clean and jerk were established in the '80s by Bulgaria's Antonio Krastev and Belarus's Leonid Taranenko, respectively. However, even though the political landscape changed in many parts of Europe, and the organized and

state-sponsored programs of early selection, training academies, and subsidized coaches were either de-funded or scaled back, those countries continued to outperform the US and most of the rest of the world, in large part, because the culture of weightlifting never died.

The Deprivation Principle

As Todd noted, any system that incorporates an early identification of weightlifting talent certainly wields a decided advantage. Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, this approach and other aspects of the Soviet-inspired system had its roots in the post-World War II era and thrived in societies of greatest deprivation. Mike Stone recalls meeting various coaches and scientists during his IWF-sponsored visits to Eastern Europe.

One of the things they consistently told me was as they were making their recovery, and of course many of them were under a Communist system, they looked at sport as a way of advertisement. There are some high profile sports that we have, like track and field, but there are also sports that other people are really looking at like weightlifting, and they actually made a concerted effort to get into those sports and put a lot of money into those sports to build them up. In fact, almost to a person, every single sports scientist told me that, including Lazlo Nadori, who was around at that time and almost single-handedly changed the sports face in Hungary during the 1950s. That's one of the stories that I got consistently, that they actually picked sports. Okay, what sports do we think we can make a splash in? And weightlifting was one of them. They're coming out of the war. They're putting their country back together.²⁹

Todd agrees, and points to “the incredible performances produced by China's decision to use tens of thousands of hungry women weightlifters as a means of dominating a

new sporting category and earning gold medals.” This deprivation model, as Zygmunt Smalcerz attests, was put into place in Poland during the early 1950s, despite shortages and rationing. “At home we were really very lucky to eat bread sometimes. It was everywhere a queue to buy bread and to buy sugar. It was a very difficult time.” Even with meager resources, however, the government started funneling money into clubs for weightlifting. Results were not immediate, but by the end of the ‘50s Polish lifters were showing up on the international scene winning medals. “We needed time.” It was not so much *despite* deprivation but *because* of it that Polish weightlifting gained strength.

This scenario continued to prevail in subsequent decades as a fundamental principle of developing powers. While social and economic deprivation helped athletes in other countries, it detracted from the performance of American athletes who could go into other fields and other sports to achieve a better life. Jim Schmitz, like Todd, cites the example of China:

Their best athletes come from the poorest parts of that country. They come from the out-of-the-way, the outback and the wilderness where only the strong survive, and they're hungry to improve themselves and see the world and raise their status and make money. Even in Poland, though they're doing well financially and economically these days, their athletes and especially their good athletes come from the poorer parts, like the Dolega brothers; they come from a small town where there's only two sports and the people do either soccer or weightlifting because both are ways in which a person can get some fame and fortune and improve their standard of living. But definitely in China and in Thailand. I had talks with the coaches of these various countries, like the Indonesian coach, and he said the same thing. They get their kids from the poor parts of their country. And that's going on in Colombia and Venezuela these days. The same thing in Ecuador. North Korea had a phenomenal Olympics in London. South Korea's

probably doing better overall in other sports, but in South Korea what they do is approach their weightlifting programs like socialist countries do. They go to the schools and tap kids on the shoulder and test them and offer them a nice reward if they become a successful weightlifter. South Korea is the only country in the free world that's doing really well at the Olympic level in weightlifting now. Kazakhstan's a great example. They have this little Chinese girl, Chinese-Kazak [Zulfiya Chinshanlo], who lives somewhere on the border of China and Kazakhstan. She comes from a very poor tribe. She was 53 [kilo] Olympic and world champion.³⁰

In Cuba, Wes Barnett witnessed “a people who have nothing. So sport was a way out. ... So you look at what these individuals had on the line compared to being in the United States where you could be anything. ... Those opportunities didn't exist for other athletes throughout the world where sport was the end all and be all. That's where success comes from.” Dragomir Cioroslan agrees that in Eastern Europe sport provides an opportunity for those suffering from economic and social deprivation to have a car, an apartment, plenty to eat, and even the possibility of national and international fame. “It is known that many of the high performers in weightlifting are not coming from the valedictorians in the colleges and universities. They're coming from blue collar families and social environments where life is kind of difficult and work is hard, and promises little for future success.”³¹ Harvey Newton recalls Thomas Ajan telling him shortly after the iron curtain came down that “weightlifting results in Hungary were really going backwards. I said, ‘I'm surprised to hear that,’ but he said ‘no, it's good for us,’ and I said ‘why is that?’ And he said, ‘it means that our life is getting better.’” Likewise, when someone asked Denis Reno “what does the US have to do to become good in weightlifting?” his joking but serious answer was “we have to become poor. Nice and poor. People have to have something to aspire to. But we're too rich. Even our poor people are rich.”

The Fear Factor

Utilizing sport to overcome deprivation was a

common characteristic among Eastern European weightlifters in the 1970s and 1980s. Fear of losing newly won advantages served as an ongoing motivation. "There's great incentive there," explains Carl Miller, "because...you are in a country which has very little freedom, and you'll train like hell to get an apartment, a car, regular food, and all that kind of stuff." He spent five days in Bulgaria with Abadjiev, the head coach, and observed training sessions he deemed brutal — three times a day with maximum weights. Miller asked "how can these people take all this training? His [Abadjiev's] comment was, 'in any war there are casualties.' But you're also going to have people coming up. They will fight for the chance to get up there, and the discipline of those days before the Berlin wall went down still largely remains." They were part of a system, Wes Barnett explains, where weightlifting was an escape. "If I were put in a situation where it comes down to if I win I have a better life for my family, I would do anything that's available to me. I'm going to do it because it's more than just about winning and sport. It's about living. It's about life." Ben Green recalls training briefly with Tony Urrutia shortly after his defection from Cuba in 1980.

He said, 'let me tell you a story, Ben. I was over-training. My coach had a stick. Tony, you got to do six snatches with 150 singles today. I missed my first. The guy hit me. You owe me six. I missed my second one. He hit me again. You owe me six. I just can't do it, coach. You will do it. Keep going.' Finally Tony said, 'Ben, I couldn't have snatched 100 kilos. Finally, and he hit me and he flipped out and says you blankety blankety blank.' Tony says, 'I quit.' He threw the shit down. He went home. He got a call from his mommy and daddy. 'Tony, what have you done? They've kicked us out of our apartment. They're going to pick up your Mercedes. You have no place to live, you have no place to make money. What are you going to do?' I was back in the gym the next day doing that 150. That's a little motivation.

Although this encounter was no doubt an extreme case

and may even be an exaggeration, the scenario of possibly losing hard-fought gains furnished an incentive for even greater performances. "I think a certain fear that they came from nothing persisted," observes Bruce Klemens, "and Abadjiev will throw them out on their asses if they give any guff or don't do what he said. When someone asked Abadjiev why these guys are training so intensely; don't they get hurt? Yeah, I just get more lifters."

Cultural Conditioning

Notwithstanding the decade of American dominance under Bob Hoffman, various interviewees cite the centuries of strength tradition in Eastern cultures. "You know it's cultural and it's historical," observes Jim Schmitz, "and so they take great pride that they are strong; historically Armenia and Azerbaijan and Turkey, that whole area. They all take great pride in their weightlifting and wrestling." While a young boy in the United States might aspire to be a basketball player or a golfer, a young boy in Georgia or Azerbaijan might want to be a weightlifter. "It's a cultural thing," concurs John Coffee. "I think weightlifting is associated with beer halls and Eastern Europe and the Chinese and with things that are not really American in most people's minds." This alien outlook is obvious in Leonid Matveyev's classic 1971 book on periodization, according to Mike Stone. Indeed "the whole first chapter deals with why the Communist system is better than other systems and then how sport fits into this system. And that sport is an export of their way of life, and the reason they're so good at it is because of the Communist system."³² Zygmunt Smalcerz describes it as a closed system where information about the capitalists and America was "blocked. For me this system was fantastic because I got everything I needed." With nothing to contaminate the government's construct of the world, there was no reason to suspect that conditions were better anywhere else.

Dragomir Cioroslan describes how Eastern Europeans established a culture of success in weightlifting. "If you do it well you got support, and that was a great motivation factor. It's all about creating the environment, the high performance culture to succeed. Of course the wider the support base for recruitment, talent development, and further financial support, the greater the chance of success." Harvey Newton recalls watching a Tom Brokaw TV special on possible reasons for the remarkable success of African and African-American

athletes, a segment of which examined the superiority of Kenyan runners. In addition to

elevation and a couple of other things, [Brokaw] said the bottom line is that the Kenyans have created a culture of success. They enter races expecting to win. ... In my [Harvey Newton's] backyard Spruce Creek High School is a consistent top performer in state championships in weightlifting. Anyone going to their high school regardless of their interest in weightlifting knows that their school has a record equaled by no other school in the state. Simply stated, there is a culture of success in weightlifting at Spruce Creek. The culture of expected success has a big impact on performances, common to those at the top of the podium. I think we can all agree that the United States does not currently have a culture that promotes excellence in international weightlifting.³³

Bruce Klemens observes that “in the fifties there was always some place you could do Olympic lifts, and probably by the end of the seventies we started to get things the way they are now, where if you tried to do a clean and jerk in a chrome gym, they’ll throw you out.” Ironically “the more popular weight training got, the less popular weightlifting got.” With weightlifting “becoming more and more a cult sport,” it became difficult to create a culture of success.

How different the cultural conditioning of American lifters has been to that of their adversaries is amply illustrated by two anecdotes related by Les Simonton. The first came from American weightlifting official and physician David Pursley, who,

was telling me when he was at a junior world championship in Asia a few years ago a Chinese lifter girl dislocated her elbow pretty severely in competition. It turns out that Dr. Pursley was not the medical officer, but he ended up being the one going to the hospital with her because her coaches wouldn't. She wasn't worth anything to the coaches

any more. They had ten more waiting in the wings. It's a different mentality.

The second involves Gabor Mate, a Hungarian athlete on the Auburn University track team who,

asked me [Les Simonton] where I usually train, and I said I train in my garage with weights and a platform. He didn't scoff at it but said 'oh that's typical American.' That kind of hit me. I wonder what that means? I got to thinking about it, and after some trips overseas I realized they generally don't have something like that in a house. It's like a community. They might have a sports facility at which they have the weights or outdoor fields or basketball courts or things where you go there to do it. You don't do something in your basement there.

The way most training is done in other countries is more communal or collectivist than individualistic. To Laurie Lopez, it's all about culture. “As I’m sure Zygmunt will attest, they take kids at a very young age, and raise them, and this is their life, and that’s what they’re commissioned to do basically. It isn’t that way in this culture, and I don’t think our athletes have the same constitution or drive, partly because they have other interests. I think it’s a real cultural difference and that is why we haven’t been as successful as other countries in the last forty years.”

A Crossfit Solution?

Whether CrossFit, which incorporates both weightlifting movements in its training and competitions will help bring American weightlifting out of its half-century slump has been much debated. Many of the 7,000 CrossFit “boxes” (gyms) that have emerged since its official launch in 2000 offer specific times, places, and instruction for the Olympic lifts.³⁴ As a result, Art Drechsler believes “the ‘worm’ has turned. CrossFit’s emphasis on Olympic style lifting and its use for improving athletic performance have dramatically increased interest in our sport. ... I see a very positive future for weightlifting in this country.” Jim Lorimer, who observes that these athletes are not only fit but phe-

nomenally explosive, sees CrossFit as a recruiting ground for Olympic lifters. Bruce Klemens agrees that CrossFit is “a good thing, and even if these people don’t go into competition, it exposes what a snatch is, and what a clean is to everybody else in the gym. Denis Reno also supports CrossFit and sees it as a way to bring more people and money into the sport through the training of level one club coaches.

They may never coach a weightlifter, but they pay a fee to do it, and they pay a fee to renew every year, so that they could say they were certified as a club coach. So this is bringing money in. It’s one of the few money-making things that we have. ... I think the CrossFit people are being drawn into the Olympic lifts more than the football players because they specifically have to do snatches and I think they have cleans of some sort. ... So we’re hoping to pick up people from that. I think it is wonderful.

Jim Schmitz also sees the financial benefits accruing to weightlifting from CrossFit. He sees it as “an amazing phenomenon that’s doing great things for weightlifting in this country. If for nothing else, it’s given people like myself an added income from training people who don’t care about being a weightlifter, but they want to know the snatches and clean and jerks, the exercises, because they want to be better at CrossFit.³⁵ And crossfitters don’t think about going to the Olympics,” he adds.

Mike Stone agrees that a lot of people are making money from CrossFit, including some weightlifting coaches, but “you would be hard-pressed to show that CrossFit, the way that it’s done, is a good thing to do. I never saw a cross-fitter that trains like a cross-fitter that is really a good weightlifter, I mean at the top, and I don’t think I ever will.” The problem, according to Harvey Newton, “is that nobody has found a link with them that has improved US weightlifting yet. We’re selling more shoes. We’re selling more uniforms. We’re selling more bumper plates, but we’re not getting any better lifters.” The most telling criticism of CrossFit comes from Mike Conroy who estimates half of the 6,000 level one coaches he oversees are crossfitters. “They come in and they want to learn the Olympic lifts but only as it relates back to CrossFit.” Mike Stone, he points out,

“figured out that if you really want to be a successful weightlifter you have to put sets in front of reps. In other words, you got to do it right, and then you got to rest, and then you got to do it right again.” Stone says,

when you pull a barbell from the floor it does three things. You got peak force, peak power, and peak acceleration. ... Well if you don’t maintain the quality, the peak acceleration falls off, and so after about three reps at 80% it really falls apart. So that’s why in cycle one in a preparation phase weightlifters will do triples. Then in the power phase they’ll do doubles. Then in the neural phase prior to competition they’ll do heavy singles. Now you’re attacking the nervous system. Well if you’re going to hang around in the anaerobic threshold area, technique is going to suffer physiologically because the ATP [adenosine triphosphate] doesn’t store itself for that long. It falls apart. If you’re trying to pound out, and the famous CrossFit one is the snatch ladder where they skip rope for fifty skips, and then they snatch, and then they skip, and then they just go up in weight. But it doesn’t relate back to weightlifting as a sport. To me, when I tell them, snatching’s hard enough, why would I want to skip rope in between? That anaerobic threshold just causes the technique to fall apart, and then if you understand some of the ideas of motor learning, what happens at the end is the technique that’s remembered. So when the technique breaks down, that unfortunately starts to become the pattern.

Lou DeMarco does not think highly of CrossFit. “Don’t get me wrong,” he cautions, “I think very highly of these people’s skill in what they do, and they are the fittest people on earth, and I admire them for that, but as far as developing our sport, no. It’s like comparing a marathoner to a sprinter. If you want to run the marathon or a mile, you’d better go out and do ten or twenty miles a day [Ed. note: This is an obvious exag-

generation.], whereas a sprinter, what does he do? That's what our sport is. Our sport is an explosive sport, not repetitions. And it's taking away some of our lifters." John Coffee believes "CrossFit is not interested in helping USA Weightlifting. They're making money hand over fist. CrossFit, the way it's run now is an abomination in my opinion." The best way to train for weightlifting, Coffee insists, is train as heavy, hard, and often as possible without getting hurt. Terry Todd suggests,

We probably need to wait a while before deciding what the overall impact CrossFit will have on competitive weightlifting. Without question, tens of thousands more people are now doing snatching and cleaning and push-pressing or push-jerking in the U.S. than have ever done them before — women as well as men. Without question, those tens of thousands of men and women are becoming more fit and explosive as a partial result of their regular use of weightlifting movements. And without question these men and women have a far greater understanding and appreciation for the great feats of power our competitive lifters can perform. Also, CrossFit has brought a lot of previously unavailable money to various parts of our sport, so for all these reasons it seems likely that in the years to come at least some of the tens of thousands of crossfitters here and in other countries will decide to either leave CrossFit and focus on weightlifting or to compete in both sports.

An American Model?

The dilemma that has confronted American weightlifting since the early 1970s can best be understood as a competition between socialist/totalitarian and capitalist/democratic cultures in the sports arena. That was how Bob Hoffman and his Soviet adversaries perceived it during the heart of the Cold War era, but while Bob was employing his company's profits to nurture teams he hoped would show the superiority of the "American Way," the Russians and Eastern Europeans, with government leverage, were creating a more power-

ful model of athletic development by tapping the resources of entire nations to serve opposite ideological ends. By such means they were able to create a large pool of weightlifters to recruit potential champions, identify local talent early, establish and subsidize clubs and camps, control what sports could be developed and promoted, provide maximum publicity and incentives, offer scientific and medical support for the use of performance-enhancing drugs, and cultivate a competitive environment within a national team. Most often this motivation resulted from conditions of deprivation whereby weightlifting was perceived as a means of social mobility.

These conditions could not readily be applied within the free enterprise and democratic structure of the United States, yet officials attempted during the 1970s and 1980s to resurrect American fortunes by replicating what seemed to work for the Europeans.³⁶ This process started with demands for a national coach and resulted in the hiring of Carl Miller, who was called a coordinator. Miller was followed by Denis Reno, Dick Smith, Harvey Newton, and finally Dragomir Cioroslan. Then the need for a national coaching center was realized with the Colorado Springs residential program, which enjoyed only partial success. Assuming Europeans were benefitting from advanced training procedures, officials next began translating and publishing their studies in *The Soviet Sports Review* and other sports performance digests.³⁷ Americans thus learned what Soviet bloc athletes were doing, but to no avail. Then a hue and cry emerged for more money. So Murray Levin, who was president from 1976 to 1988, managed to attract considerable funding from corporate sponsors, and the sport received a windfall of 1.2 million dollars from the 1984 Olympics, but American lifts and placements continued to show no improvement in international competition. None of the interviewees in this study seemed to know what happened to all that money in subsequent years, but it did virtually nothing to improve the state of American weightlifting. They are also all aware that even though wealth is being generated by the registration of thousands of crossfitters and lucrative coaches clinics, American weightlifting in 2014 seemed less poised to make its mark on the international stage than in 1972.

Obviously, attempts to mimic the Eastern European model of success — while still adhering to an amateur training protocol inherited from the sixties — were not working. It was an ill-considered attempt to apply a

model drawn from underprivileged societies that were prepared to use political means to achieve nationalistic and ideological ends. Perhaps it might be better to take advantage of America's greatest natural resource — individual free enterprise and its powerhouse economy — which Bob Hoffman did and countless other sports are doing, by professionalizing weightlifting and adopting some of the measures recommended by Pete George to endow it with popular appeal.³⁸ This might avoid the strictures not only of the USOC that Jim Lorimer encountered but the autocracy of the international overlords. By such means the face of international tennis was transformed several decades ago, enabling it to become an Olympic sport. *[Ed. note: This analogy fails to consider the worldwide popularity of tennis — a spectator sport of a type very different from weightlifting.]* In some way, as Bruce Klemens points out, “the desire has to come out of the lifter himself.” But instead of discipline being imposed by an elite governing body, it would come from lifters who would be motivated not by fear of lapsing into poverty but the prospect of enjoying fortune and fame the same result achieved by their ex-Communist counterparts through a system that supposedly rejects those values. In other words, the sport would be incentivized from outside rather than inside the system and from the bottom up rather than the top down. How popular weightlifting could be if properly showcased was obvious to me as I witnessed the Centennial Olympics in Atlanta. My description of it that subsequently appeared in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* is as true now as it was in 1996.³⁹

If America remains true to its capitalist tradition, the key component to success will likely be consumer demand. Whether the competition in Atlanta was ‘the greatest Weightlifting event in history’ may be debated, but it did have genuine audience appeal.⁴⁰ Probably not more than 10 per cent of the 5,000 spectators at each of the 20 sessions had ever seen a live contest, but virtually 100 per cent enjoyed the experience. The giant score board, the use of closed circuit television from five angles on two large screens, instant replay, biographical information on the lifters, and the employment of music between lifts

all contributed to this successful showcasing. ‘What we were seeing wasn’t just a world class weightlifting contest,’ concluded Jim Schmitz, ‘but living proof of just how popular the sport can be.’⁴¹ Despite overpriced tickets (\$45 for group A and \$23 for group B) and overpriced food and services (\$4.00 for a large box of Cracker Jacks!) the crowd was enthralled by the spectacle of Olympic competition.⁴²

Much the same kind of crowd exposure is made available each year at the Arnold Sports Festival, albeit on a more limited scale and featuring only American lifters.⁴³ But the message is the same — if United States weightlifting is to escape from the doldrums and become competitive again it must create a new culture of success relevant to its capitalist and democratic society and not follow the old one that was uniquely fashioned for socialist and non-democratic regimes. To realize the American dream of medals in weightlifting, as in days of yore, the sport must escape the clutches of authoritarian governing bodies and become more spectator-friendly. Only by engaging the power of the sport-loving public with more exciting competitions will USA Weightlifting attract the kind of money and talent that will put American lifters back on the podium at Olympic and world championships.

NOTES

1. Murray Levin interview with the author, 30 March 2013, Boca Raton, Florida.
2. Two weeks later Levin received a letter from Kemp “stating that he now realized I was right.” Levin to the author, 11 December 2013.
3. Dube never thought Bob over-commercialized lifting or took more than was his due. “I needed help financially and York gave it.” Joe Dube interview with the author, 8 November 1993, Jacksonville, Florida.
4. John Fair, “The USA vs. the World: A Statistical Analysis of American, World, and Olympic Weightlifting Results, 1970-1992,” *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 12, no. 3 (August 2013): 19-25; John Fair, “An Analytical Narrative of American, World, and Olympic Weightlifting Results, 1970-1992,” *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 12, no. 4 (August 2014): 30-53.
5. See also Randall J. Strossen, “Wes Barnett, All-American Medal Detector,” *Milo* 4, no. 3 (October 1996): 12-14.
6. See also Tommy Kono, *Weightlifting Olympic Style* (Honolulu, HI: Hawaii Kono Company, 2001), and Tommy Kono, *Championship Weightlifting, Beyond Muscle Power, the Mental Side of Lifting*

(Honolulu: Hawaii Kono Company, 1010).

7. See also Jim Murray, "Jim Lorimer: The Iron Game's Greatest Promoter," *Iron Game History* 5, no.3 (December 1998): 4-7.

8. See Carl Miller, *The Sport of Olympic-Style Weightlifting, Training for the Connoisseur* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2011).

9. See also "Mark Rippetoe," <http://startingstrength.com/index.php/site/about>.

10. See also Bruce Wilhelm, "Jim Schmitz: Coach and Trainer of Champions," *Milo* 15, no. 2 (September 2007): 42-49.

11. See also "An Interview with Zymunt Smalcerz," *The International Olympic Lifter* 3, no 1 (January 1976): 10-11.

12. See John D. Fair, "Georgia: Cradle of Southern Strongmen," *Atlanta History, A Journal of Georgia and the South* 45 (2002): 41. Perhaps the best example of a weightlifter being seduced from football is the legendary Paul Anderson. See Paul Anderson, *The World's Strongest Man* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1975), 36-38.

13. That this issue remains alive is evident in articles by Scott Safe, "Making the Case for a National High School Weightlifting Program" and by Artie Drechsler, "USAW's New Scholastic/Collegiate Development and LWC Initiatives" in *USA Weightlifting* (March 2012): 2-3, 5.

14. What Smalcerz meant by an identification of talent was spelled out in a presentation he made to the National Junior Championships at Foster City, California, in February 2013 where he outlined the steps whereby such a program could be implemented. See the synopsis of this presentation that appeared in *Denis Reno's Weightlifter's Newsletter*, no. 359 (1 April 2013): 10, 12.

15. See also Arthur Drechsler, *The Weightlifting Encyclopedia, A Guide to World Class Performance* (Whitestone, NY: S&S Communications, 1998), 5.

16. See Herb Glossbrenner, "The Strongest Pressers of All Time," *Strength & Health* 41 (February 1973): 50-55; "The Strongest Snatchers of All Time," *Strength & Health* 41 (March 1973): 40-45; and "The Strongest Jerkers of All Time," *Strength & Health* 41 (April 1973): 36-42.

17. Actually paying bonuses for Olympic medal-winning performances is not an uncommon practice. According to *Bloomberg Businessweek* for 3 February 2014, 17 countries will pay bonuses at the Sochi Winter Olympics, with Kazakhstan leading the parade at \$250,000 for a gold medal and \$50,000 for a silver. The United States rewards its athletes with \$25,000 for a gold, \$15,000 for a silver, and \$10,000 for a bronze. See www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-02-03/winter-olympics-in-sochi-countries-that-pay-highest-medal-bonuses.

18. See "USWF Gets New Executive Director," *Weightlifting USA* 6, no. 6 (November 1988): 11.

19. Part of the discrepancy with Reno's statement comes from the fact that Conroy as well as former women's champion Carissa Gump, were hired after the Reno interview. The new CEO and General Secretary, Mike Massik, however, recruited from fencing, does not have a weightlifting background.

20. Conroy cites Massik's inaugural article to this effect in the January 2013 issue of *USA Weightlifting*, 3.

21. Included on this Weightlifting Advisory Committee were Rick Adams (USOC), Mark Cannella (Columbus Weightlifting), Dave Castro (CrossFit), John Coffee (USA Women's World Team Coach), Boyd Epley (NSCA), Gayle Hatch (US Olympic Team Coach), Brent LaLonde (Arnold Sports Festival), Jim Lorimer (Arnold Sports

Festival), Harvey Newton (USA Weightlifting), Greg Page (USA Powerlifting), Angela Simons (USA Powerlifting), Dr. Chuck Stiggins (CSCCA), Bob Takano (California Weightlifting Coach), Dr. Terry Todd (University of Texas), and Dione Wessels (North American Strongman Association). Olympian Mark Henry also attended in an unofficial capacity.

22. The advisory committee's recommendations fell under the headings of identification and recruitment, coaching and training, promotion and publicity, and funding potential. Lorimer to the author, 29 November 2012.

23. In a letter to USOC CEO Scott Blackmun, Gayle Hatch protested the conduct of Rick Adams who showed up toward the end of the meeting and delivered "what could best be described as a 40 minute tirade against the USAW. We were all told how poor the USAW's performance was, along with that of a number of individual athletes. The USAW was compared to more successful NGBs in a very negative tone that went far beyond reporting on any perceived facts. The conclusion was that essentially the USAW was the worst NGB in the USOC family and was beyond help, so the USOC had given up on it." No less disheartening was his response to Lorimer's offer to send him a copy of the committee's recommendations. "Mr. Adams indicated that there was no point in providing him with a copy!" Hatch to Blackmun, 26 November 2012, copy of letter in the author's possession.

24. Much the same sort of principle transpired at York Barbell in the 1930s between Olympic champion Tony Terlazzo and John Terpak who were, as Bob Hoffman noted, "'the closest of rivals and best of friends,' and as they pounded typewriters outside his office, they challenged each other to private contests." See *Strength & Health* 5 (August 1937): 9; and John D. Fair, *Muscle town USA, Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 62.

25. "Then officials were king" is Gary Gubner's recollection of the Hoffman era. "Lifters had no say. Lifters when travelling just followed along. You could get cut off from international competition if you didn't behave." Gary Gubner interview with the author, 15 June 1992, Weston, Connecticut.

26. Vern Gambetta is the founder and head of Gambetta Sports Training Systems in Sarasota, Florida, which espouses the concept of functional path training or building the complete athlete. www.gambetta.com

27. The Soviet system of clubs which served as a model for Smalcerz's club was actually derived from Eastern European sokols. As early as the 1860s these physical culture clubs were formed by wealthy citizens in Moscow and St. Petersburg for a variety of sports. By 1905 there were about a hundred sport and gymnastic societies in Russia. Although the Communist regime viewed them as counter-revolutionary and put a damper on their activities, many of them survived in the 1920s as military clubs managed by the state where swimming, boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting were practiced. See Henry W. Morton, *Soviet Sport* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 156-60; and Deobold B. Van Dalen and Bruce L. Bennett, *A World History of Physical Education, Cultural, Philosophical, Comparative* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 314.

28. This scenario also applied to the East Germans, as a 1976 article translated by Pete Talluto pointed out. "Training for weight lifting ought to begin in the 10-14 year age group," it advised. Then "at the age of 14 they are ready for a complete program using maximum

loads in snatch, clean and jerk, squats, and the assistance exercises." J. Kristensen, "Training in East Germany for 10-14 Year Olds," *The International Olympic Lifter* 3/5 (May 1976): 10.

29. Deobold Van Dalen and Bruce Bennett observed in 1971 that the Soviet Union since 1950 "has fully exploited the propaganda value from the success of their athletes in international competition. Their athletes abroad serve as cultural diplomats, and sports are truly an instrument of Russian foreign policy." Van Dalen and Bennett, *A World History*, 309.

30. See "Kazakh Chinshanlo's Baffling Records," *World Weightlifting, Official Magazine of the International Weightlifting Federation* 3 (2012): 10.

31. Matt Foreman recalls a reporter asking Romanian champion Nicu Vlad what he thought about training top young lifters. "In Romania," he responded, "I train on a bar that is bent. My gym has bad lighting and very little heat in the winter. Here in America, you have everything you need to train. It's not in the bar or the gym or the platform . . . it's in you." Matt Foreman, *Bones of Iron, Collected Articles on the Life of the Strength Athlete* (Sunnyvale, CA: Catalyst Athletics, 2011), 121.

32. "Without denying the significance of sport's role in the self-assertion of a personality, Marxist sociology shows that it can be regarded as a truly human activity only in its social aspects," according to Leonid Matveyev in *Fundamentals of Sports Training* (Moscow: Fizkultura Sport Publishers, 1977), 13-14.

33. See "Boys Weightlifting, 2011-12 Championship Records," www.fhsaa.org/sites/default/files/orig_uploads/records/rec_wtb.pdf.

34. CrossFit can be traced back to the 1970s when former gymnast Greg Glassman and his ex-wife Lauren Jenai initiated these exercises in a garage gym in Santa Cruz, California, but it was not until after the turn of the century that the concept mushroomed. From 2005 to 2013 the number of CrossFit gyms grew from 18 to over 6,000 worldwide. The top prize for individual champions in 2013 was \$275,000. Reebok, the corporate sponsor, has increased the total purse to \$1,000,000. History of CrossFit: www.crossfitinfo.com/history-of-crossfit/; and www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPAXQtDNLQ0; and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CrossFit>.

35. According to its "Profit & Loss" statement for January through June of 2012, USA Weightlifting had a total income of \$1,159,859 with \$919,860 in expenses for a net profit of \$239,999. Membership fees amounted to \$272,875 or 23.52% of total income, while coaching course income of \$653,835 was 56.37%. If the \$46,375 earned from coaching re-certifications is added to coaching course income (instead of membership fees), this figure would reach \$700,210 or 60.37%. Membership fees and coaching course income, both driven in the past decade by CrossFit recruits, are the largest items on the income side of the ledger, amounting to a composite of \$926,710 or 79.89% of USA Weightlifting's total income for the six month period. By 30 June 2012, its total assets were \$981,303. Copies of statements in author's possession.

36. Matt Foreman noted in 2011 that "China's gradual rise to the top of the world over the last fifteen years has likely been based on this classical Eastern European training methodology. But now that China's success is eclipsing these other traditional power countries, we must acknowledge that they have broken new ground in the training of weightlifters." Foreman, *Bones of Iron*, 18.

37. Michael Yessis' *Soviet Sports Review* was published from 1966 to 1994 in Laguna Beach, California. See also Michael Yessis, *Secrets of Soviet Sports Fitness and Training* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1987). "In almost all sports, athletes from the Soviet Union and other socialist-bloc nations have consistently outperformed Western competitors," maintains Yessis, a physical education professor at California State University, Fullerton. . . . Extolling the virtues of Soviet prowess, he advocates the separation of sports and politics, credits Soviet sports physicians with generosity and openness, and maintains that the 'secrets' of their superiority are accessible to Americans. Soviet success is due, he says, to a scientifically based system that includes sophisticated sports research, novel physical and psychological training regimens, innovative equipment and new competitive tactics." Cited in an extract from *Publishers Weekly* in www.amazon.com/Secrets-Soviet-Sports-Fitness-Training/dp/0688082467.

38. For an interesting analysis of the current state of American weightlifting, largely from a west coast perspective see Greg Everett's *American Weightlifting, A Documentary* (Sunnyvale, CA: Catalyst Athletics, 2013). In the section entitled "Public Perspectives," Casey Burgener observes that "nobody really knows about Olympic-style weightlifting." Everett then points out that "the entertainment value of weightlifting is probably lower than a lot of other sports. Americans like to see guys dance. They like to see guys score touchdowns and dunk the football over the uprights. They like to see people slam dunk the ball and perform all kinds of theatrics. There's a huge entertainment value to it, and in weightlifting that just doesn't come across." Matt Foreman, however, insists "we don't have to change the sport to make it interesting enough for spectators. You have people watching golf and fishing and poker on TV in this country, and you can't tell me that those things are more exciting or interesting than weightlifting. The issue is that there are a lot more people that participate in those things and can understand them and appreciate the difficulty of them and are consequently interested in watching them." But Foreman's lack of any formula for eliciting greater participation in weightlifting brings the whole question back to numbers.

39. See John D. Fair, "The Iron Game and Capitalist Culture: A Century of American Weightlifting in the Olympics, 1896-1996," *The International Journal on the History of Sport* 15, no. 3 (December 1998), 32.

40. Mike Gattone to the author, 1 August 1996, letter in the author's possession.

41. Jim Schmitz, "The Best Ever, XXVI Olympic Games," *Milo* 4, no. 3 (October 1996): 5, 11.

42. Personal observations by the author, 20-30 July 1996, Atlanta, Georgia.

43. Although Wes Barnett recognized that "they organize a good meet," he was dismayed by the cap placed on the number of entrants and by the "circus-like atmosphere that's going on there. It's just with all that setting and the music and everything that's going on, is that the right setting for the athletes to be able to go produce their best performance?" (Barnett Interview.)



SHIFTING GEAR: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF SUPPORTIVE APPAREL IN POWERLIFTING

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In many ways, powerlifting is an odd sport. Competitors do not run or jump; no balls, bats, or rackets are used; and only one competitor “plays” on the lifting platform at a time. Judging can be highly subjective; three judges intently watch as the athlete lifts the loaded barbell nine separate times over the course of the competition. There is no instant replay and most lifts take less than ten seconds to perform. At the end of the lift, each judge throws a switch; if at least two white lights appear, the lift is good; if two or more lights are red, the lift does not count. Three squats, three bench presses, and three deadlifts constitute the nine attempts of a powerlifting contest. At most, lifters spend ninety seconds “competing” during what is generally a day-long contest.

Uninitiated audience members who find themselves at a powerlifting meet will probably view watching such a meet as an exercise in endurance — their own, not the lifters’. In truth, it is not a great spectator sport; meets tend to run slowly, often lasting an entire day. Further, little is done by meet promoters and announcers to help the audience understand that they are actually watching not one but dozens of contests playing out simultaneously as lifters compete based on age, weight class, drug use status, level of experience, and, increasingly these days, on the basis of what kind of “gear” they wear to perform their lifts.

In powerlifting, the debate over appropriate gear — by which we mean the various types of supportive wraps and clothing worn while competing — dates to the earliest days of the sport, and has had a profound influence on the present state of powerlifting. Among the most significant aspects of the sport’s fascination with what we define as “PEG — Performance Enhancing Gear” — is the role it has played in the fragmentation of

the sport into several dozen sporting federations, and the willingness of many of these national governing bodies to allow various levels of gear-assisted lifting in their organizations. If sport philosopher Robert Simon is right that, “sport” is nothing more than a group of rules that define and delimit how the central contest of the sport is to be enacted by participants, then powerlifting, by virtue of having many different sets of rules, may not be one sport — but many.¹

Interest in the impact of technology on sport performance has been explored in other sports like swimming and track and field. However, scholars have paid little attention to technology in powerlifting.² This is not surprising given the fact that powerlifting is not part of the Olympic family, and that it remains in the eyes of most a “minor sport.”³ Nonetheless, the history of gear in powerlifting bears consideration for the future of sport. Our hope is that by describing the history of gear from our insider’s perspective — all four authors competed in the sport.) — we can lay a base for other scholars who might wish to explore this topic in the future. We begin, therefore, with a discussion of the kinds of gear currently in use, follow that with a history of the evolution of supportive gear in powerlifting, and conclude with a brief analysis of the impact of gear on records and performance in the sport.

One of the questions driving this research is why various powerlifting federations have reacted to the new technological changes in gear in so many different ways. Track and field, for example, uniformly adopted flexible fiberglass and carbon-fiber vaulting poles in the 1950s, just as modern tennis rackets — with their 40 percent larger heads, 30 percent lighter weight, and 300 percent greater stiffness — have become standard at all levels of tennis.⁴ No one plays with wooden rackets any longer, and no pole-vaulter of note still uses a bamboo pole. Powerlifting, however, runs the gamut from essentially “anything goes,” to no supportive gear, and has not

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adopted a single paradigm for legal equipment as most sports do. What we find particularly fascinating is that this paradigm of “virtually limitless freedom” encourages multiple forms of the sport to occur simultaneously during “a” contest.⁵

As Jan and Terry Todd point out in their essay, “Reflections on the ‘Parallel Federation Solution,’” after American powerlifters decided to organize both “drug-permitting” and “drug-free” federations in the 1980s, other powerlifting federations formed, and were able to create their own rules covering matters such as doping, the performance of the lifts themselves, and appropriate gear. The multiple-federation approach described by the Todds means, however, that the accolade “record holder” is now meaningful only within the context of the federation in which the record was set as there are too many differences in the rules of these disparate federations to compare lifts in any meaningful way.⁶ In September 2015, for example, according to the website PowerliftingWatch.com, there were 33 different powerlifting federations operating in the United States and nine different international federations.⁷ Although many of the rules used by these federations are similar, and in some instances are exactly the same, there are also stark differences from federation to federation – which have caused some federations to acquire a reputation for having much higher records than other associations. Consider for just a moment, the possibilities lifters have to set records in the different divisions sanctioned by the American Powerlifting Federation (APF). The APF, originally formed in 1982 by powerlifter Ernie Frantz, began as an association for lifters who wanted the freedom to take anabolic substances if they wished and to not be subject to drug testing.⁸ The APF now sponsors three kinds of competitions based on the gear permitted — open, single-ply, and raw. In order to have a larger membership, they also offer what they call “non-tested” and “amateur” divisions. The term “amateur” in this instance refers to an athlete who chooses not to use performance enhancing drugs. It has no connection to the traditional meaning of amateurism and whether that person earns money from his or her sport.⁹

As Table 1 demonstrates, the APF has embraced the use of gear technology wholeheartedly in its open division, placing no limits on the layers or kinds of fabric permitted in the “suits” worn while lifting. In the “Single-ply” division, however, lifters may wear supportive suits made with only one layer of fabric while the “Raw” divisions is for those athletes who choose to compete

wearing only a non-supportive singlet, belt, knee sleeves rather than knee wraps, and wrist wraps. This means that in one APF contest there could be *six* different men (or women) all of whom are lifting in a single weight class — who could set an American record because the APF recognizes: open geared, open one-ply, open raw, amateur geared, amateur one-ply, and amateur Raw divisions. If masters, submasters, juniors, and teenage age divisions are also considered — the number of records possible in one weight class becomes even more outlandish. The APF recognizes 14 age subdivisions plus its regular open division. If those 15 divisions are multiplied by the six categories offered to accommodate different kinds of gear and drug-testing, 90 different men, or 90 different women, could legitimately claim to be an “American Record Holder” in each lift or the overall total in one weight class in the APF.¹⁰

Gearing Up for Powerlifting

Before continuing, a brief explanation of supportive gear is necessary for those unfamiliar with the sport. All federations require lifters to appear on the platform in a “lifting suit.” A single-ply suit (made of one layer of fabric) generally resembles a wrestling singlet but with wider straps and mid-thigh length legs. Raw lifters wear stretchy wrestling or Olympic weightlifting singlets generally made of nylon, polyester, or spandex knit that are non-restrictive if sized properly; they provide no additional support to the lifter. Raw lifters also normally wear one suit for the entire meet.

Geared lifters, on the other hand, change their costume for each lift. In the squat, they wear what is now generically called a “super suit,” made of stiff, heavy material that restricts the lifter’s natural movements and helps the competitor lift more weight. At the bottom of the squat, the suit works like a compressed spring, helping the lifter reverse direction. Researchers have theorized that energy is stored in the fabric during the descent and that the farther the fabric stretches the more it will help the lifter reverse direction. When the suit reaches the point at which it cannot stretch further, a rebound effect helps the lifter come “out of the bottom.”¹¹ The suit also provides support to the lifter’s back, abdomen, and “core” muscles, which must stay contracted to hold the body erect and thus carry the great weights lifted in “geared” powerlifting.¹² However, while both one-ply and “open” competitors can be said to wear super suits or squat suits; the strength of the materials used; the cut-

ting and sewing of the fabric in certain ways; and, most importantly, the number of layers of fabric used is dramatically different in these two divisions. Open competitors have no real limits on the number of layers of fabric they can gird themselves with when they squat.

Inzer Advanced Designs, owned and operated by former powerlifter John Inzer, is a leading source of multi-ply suits in the United States. Inzer sells the most expensive squat suits on the market with his

“Leviathan” and new “Leviathan Pro,” both priced at \$385 in 2015. On his website, Inzer explains that the original Leviathan is the “King of the Squat Suits, worn by the Kings of the Squat.” The ad then points out that “The Leviathan is a suit of armor that literally stands on its own.”¹³ Inzer has gone to great lengths to create special fabrics and methods of construction that can enhance a lifter’s performance. The Leviathan, for example, uses what Inzer calls a new “canvas hybrid.”

Table 1. American Powerlifting Federation Divisions

(Derived from Official Rule Book: World Powerlifting Congress, 2014 Edition)

Competitive Division	Supportive Bench Shirt & Undershirts	Supportive Lifting Suits for Squat and Deadlift	Supportive Briefs	Belts and Wraps	Drug Testing
Open	Unlimited layers of fabric; Polyester, denim or canvas permitted; Open backs permitted, Velcro strapping permitted. Undershirts may be worn in benching and squatting and these may also consist of multiple layers of fabric.	Unlimited layers of fabric; Polyester, denim or canvas permitted; Open backs permitted; Velcro strapping permitted.	Briefs permitted and may be made of multiple layers of any fabric.	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; Elbow wraps permitted in squat and deadlift only; Knee wraps of 2.5 meters in length permitted; Knee sleeves permitted; Belts permitted. <i>Knee wrap length is longer than many other federations.</i>	None
Amateur	Unlimited layers of fabric; Polyester, denim or canvas permitted; Open backs permitted; Velcro strapping permitted. Undershirts may be worn in benching and squatting and these may also consist of multiple layers of fabric.	Unlimited layers of fabric; Polyester, denim or canvas permitted.	Briefs permitted and may be made of multiple layers of any fabric.	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; elbow wraps permitted in squat and deadlift only; Knee wraps of 2.5 meters in length permitted; Knee Sleeves permitted; Belts permitted. <i>Knee Wrap length is longer than many other federations.</i>	Urinalysis
Open Raw	Not permitted, T-shirts only.	Single-ply, non-supportive singlet only	Not permitted	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; No knee or elbow wraps.	None
Amateur Raw	Not permitted, T-shirts only.	Single-ply, non-supportive singlet only	Not permitted	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; No knee or elbow wraps.	Urinalysis
Open “One-ply”	Single-ply polyester shirts allowed, must have closed backs and no Velcro strapping.	Single-ply polyester fabric squat suits permitted.	Single-ply polyester briefs permitted.	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; Elbow wraps permitted in squat and deadlift only; Knee wraps of 2.5 meters in length permitted; Knee Sleeves permitted; Belts permitted. <i>Knee Wrap length is longer than many other federations.</i>	None
Amateur “One-ply”	Single-ply polyester shirts allowed but must have closed backs and no Velcro strapping.	Single-ply polyester fabric squat suits permitted	Single-ply polyester briefs permitted	Wrist wraps permitted in all lifts; Elbow wraps permitted in squat and deadlift only; Knee wraps of 2.5 meters in length permitted; Knee sleeves permitted; Belts permitted. <i>Knee wrap length is longer than many other federations.</i>	Urinalysis

His advertising promises: “50-70 pound increases and more are regularly reported over conventional squat suits of the past.”¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the wearing of such highly engineered suits now means that the heaviest squats ever performed in six of the 11 men’s weight classes (198, 220, 242, 275, 308 and Superheavy-weight) are all over 1000 pounds. In fact, the heaviest squat on record (as of October 2015) is 1267.7 pounds (575 kilos), made by Jonas Rantanen of Finland in October 2011. Rantanen weighed 303 pounds (137.4 kilos) on the day he made this lift, and it is actually heavier than the superheavyweight record, held by the then 380-pound American Donnie Thompson, who managed 1265 pounds (573.8 kilos) in 2011.¹⁵

While waiting for their next attempt, single-ply- and multi-ply-wearing lifters usually sprawl and lean back in chairs, unable to sit normally because of the tightness of the suits and the rigidity of the fabric. As the time gets closer to their turn on the platform, helpers begin wrapping the lifter’s knees with long, elasticized wraps used to provide compression and add yet more rebound in the bottom of the squat.¹⁶ The last steps in preparation before the lifter heads to the platform are fitting the tight straps over the shoulders and tightening the thick, heavy belts common in powerlifting. It can take several people, who sometimes use pliers, to pull the suit straps over a lifter’s shoulders because the fabric is so stiff and the fit is so tight. This is painful to the fingers of the helpers, and so special “fitting gloves” are available these days from powerlifting supply companies that advertise such gloves will, “Save your fingers when handling and fitting gear on workout partners or yourself!”¹⁷ Inzer also launched a new kind of suit, called the Leviathan Pro, to help make getting into the suit easier. This multi-layered suit’s top half is made in sections and once the straps are over the shoulders, long laces — similar to those in a corset — draw the suit tightly around the torso, and a zipper closes to increase and secure the tightness of the fit.¹⁸



LEVIATHAN STANDS ON ITS OWN!

The two largest suppliers of powerlifting gear, Titan Support Systems and Inzer Advanced Designs, both sell a variety of levels of supportive gear to powerlifters. At the extreme ends of their offerings are the double-ply Titan Super Fury shirt with its closely set sleeves, and Inzer’s Leviathan squat suits that are so stiff and virtually unyielding that Inzer advertises the “Leviathan Stands On Its Own!”

For the bench press, the second lift of the contest, most “equipped” lifters remove their tight-fitting squat suit, replace it with a lighter singlet, and then don a bench shirt crafted to function in much the same manner as the squat suit. The bench shirt looks somewhat like a tight T-shirt from the front, but some models now have an open back and use large Velcro straps to hold the shirt in place on the body. Bench shirts also provide a spring-like effect, storing energy during the lowering of the bar and then releasing that energy after the bar touches the lifter’s chest and the upward push begins.¹⁹ Within the geared segments of the powerlifting community, most lifters believe that once the lifter learns how to use a bench shirt, and how to choose the proper size, wearing the shirt helps them lift more weight. A female powerlifter, for example, reported in a chat room, “My raw bench is 175 lb. I recently benched 240 lb with the Fury.”²⁰ On that same page, a male lifter explained that with “double denim” he bench pressed 369 pounds, and that with double-polyester he hit 480. His best “raw” bench, he explained, was only 315 pounds for two repetitions.²¹

The question of fabric for both bench shirts and suits is particularly important as the various elastic and tensile qualities of the fabrics used, and the innovative methods of construction, are analogous to the fine-tuning and types of engines seen in various forms of auto racing. All cars, for example, will have some form of a piston engine, but depending on the kind of race (Formula One vs. NASCAR, for example) they will be made of

very different materials and tuned — as well as constructed — very differently.²² In powerlifting, fabric technology and suit design play a similar role. Titan Support Systems works constantly to find ways to improve the strength of their squat suits and recently “invented” a fabric called “NXG Super Plus” that they advertise as “the strongest, heaviest fabric in the lifting world.” Titan goes on to explain in their ads, “. . . we didn’t stop there. We also included our patented built in harness system. The 3-cm seams create an anatomically precise harness system for extra support and bigger squats.” This is not all, however. “Not enough? How about state of the art, hi-tech, hi-tensile strength threads that hold incredible loads — up to 10 kg of weight per single looped thread! Then we put that thread to use by incorporating more stitching per square inch than any other suit in the lifting world.”²³

In addition to squat suits, knee wraps, and bench shirts, many lifters also wear a specially designed deadlift suit, wrist wraps, belts of varying thickness, and powerlifting briefs (which in reality, constitute an additional supportive layer for the squat).²⁴ Deadlift suits may resemble squat suits in general appearance but the fabrics used are less stiff and lifters generally agree that

the amount of help they provide is partly dependent on how one deadlifts. Some lifters place their arms inside their legs and their feet widely apart, thereby shortening the length of the pull in what is called a “sumo” deadlift. Conventional deadlifters place their feet only about hip-width apart and place their arms outside their legs when they begin the lift. Although both types of deadlifts test leg, hip, and back muscles, sumo deadlifters seem to get more advantage from wearing a deadlift suit than do conventional lifters. A powerlifter in an online discussion thread wrote, “I know a few sumo pullers who get 85-115 lbs. from their suit!”²⁵

Those with little exposure to powerlifting may well wonder why competitors would put themselves through all this for 90 seconds of competition in an admittedly minor sport. There is, in fact, a good deal of pain involved with wearing tight-fitting PEG. Wraps leave bruises circling the knees, and most lifters sport bruises and abrasions on their thighs from the squat suit’s tight legs. Bruises, open sores, and blood blisters also commonly result from bench shirts.²⁶ Those inside the sport can better understand why some lifters choose this path. Lifting bigger weights, imagining yourself as stronger than you have ever been before, is seductive even though the “bigger weights” are not the result of increased strength of muscle. This is the great appeal of gear. It is a form of performance enhancement that not only works but allows us to re-imagine our personal limits. Powerlifting gear is, in essence, an exoskeleton that the lifter encases himself within, and it allows the lifter to believe that he is stronger than he would have been without it, even though he is not. Standing on a box to harvest an out-of-reach apple does not make you taller.

The Early History

As is true for many sporting activities, there is neither a single place we can cite as the “birthplace” of powerlifting, nor a single date. In the United States, in the first four decades of the twentieth century, the only sanctioned form of competitive lifting was weightlifting and even in training sessions it was rare to see someone working hard at deadlifts, squats, or the forerunner of the bench press, the “press on floor.” In 1939, however, the Amateur Athletic Union sanctioned the first Mr. America physique contest and inadvertently created a new training goal for many weight trainers.²⁷ As bodybuilding grew in popularity in the 1940s, the bench press, squat, curl, and deadlift appeared far more frequently in gyms.



One of the USAPL’s best lifters is 2015 men’s open champion Ian Bell, who holds three American equipped records in the 93 kilo (205 pound) class. Ian, son of former world and American champion Gene Bell, squatted 375 kilos (826.75 pounds) and deadlifted 377.5 kilos (832.25 pounds) at the 2015 USAPL Nationals and also set a new total record of 967.5 kilos (2133 pounds). Although the gear he uses is all one-ply, Ian still needs help to get his PEG properly secured before he heads to the platform.



On 24 June 1949 *Iron Man* publisher Peary Rader, the tallest man on the left in this photo, and California gym owner Walt Marcyan (second on the left, seated) held a meeting to discuss the formation of a new professional association that would be known as the International Strongman Association (ISA). ISA promoted some of the earliest odd lift contests in America and helped the sport of powerlifting get its start. Following their organizational meeting, the group adjourned for dinner where this photo was taken. Seated on the left side of the table are: Peggy Redpath, Don De Marce, Walt Marcyan, Tony Terlazzo, Mrs. Terlazzo, and Mabel Rader. Standing on the left are: George Redpath, Peary Rader, unidentified man and Kerris Kerns. Standing at the end of the table and continuing to the right are: John Davis, Leo Stern, Vince Gironda, unidentified man, Willis Reed, unidentified man, Les Stockton, George Eiferman and another unidentified man. Seated on the right are David Willoughby, Gene Jantzen, Alyce Yarick, and Peggy Gironda.

And not surprisingly, some men found these simpler movements — generally referred to as “the odd lifts” — more appealing than the complexities of the clean and jerk.²⁸ Following Bob People’s historic deadlift of 725.5 pounds at a bodyweight of 181 pounds in March of 1949 — a record described by Al Thomas in *Iron Game History* in November 1992, as “the lift heard round the world” — odd lifting gained considerably in popularity. This coincided with a growing feeling of frustration among some of the most famous names in the strength world over the fact that the AAU considered them professionals and excluded them from sanctioned weightlifting and bodybuilding meets. If you owned a gym, published a magazine, coached for money, gave weightlifting exhibitions, or had in any way earned money because of your physical skills, you were ineligible according to the AAU. According to *Iron Man* magazine publisher Peary Rader, attempts to find some way to get around this rule led nowhere in the late 1940s and so Rader and California gym owner Walt Marcyan decided to take the lead in forming a new organization for men

and women like themselves who made money from lifting.

Their first step was to make plans to hold the “First Professional Strongman Championships,” and “Mr. 1949” physique contest in Los Angeles, on 25 and 26 June 1949. On 24 June, Rader held a meeting for those interested in joining forces to create a new professional association called the International Strongman Association (ISA). Attending that organizational meeting was a veritable “Who’s Who” of post-war strength aficionados that included Bert Goodrich, Walt Baptiste, Gene Jantzen, Peggy Redpath, George Redpath, George Eiferman, David Willoughby, Pudgy Stockton, Leo Stern, Karris Kern, Frank Thompson, Don DeMarce, Willis Reed, Tony Terlazzo, and Mabel Rader. By the end of the day, Peary Rader was president, Bert Goodrich was vice president, Don DeMarce was secretary-treasurer, and David Willoughby had been named record keeper and asked to draft bylaws for the group.²⁹ Rader and Marcyan hoped that in addition to sponsoring contests ISA would also serve as a true professional

association — like the National Strength and Conditioning Coaches now does, or the American College of Sports Medicine. As Rader explained their goals in *Iron Man* magazine in 1949, he and Marcyan believed, “that the Body Culture profession had advanced to the point where it needed organization for its own protection from other healing arts, as well as to give members protection within the profession.”³⁰ While ISA made little headway on the professionalization of the “Body Culture” industry, the association did play a role in the evolution of powerlifting and successfully sponsored several early meets. However, there was no uniformity of lifts. At a 1955 meet in Oakland, California, the contested lifts were the Olympic press, the upright row, the bench press, the squat, and the deadlift. According to Rader, “At this contest the highest bench press was 360 and the highest deadlift was 625 — done by a heavyweight by the name of Tiny Walsh from Ed Yarick’s gym, who weighed 263 pounds. There were also ten women contestants in this contest, a fact that suggests women were not as late to the sport as many have thought.”³¹

In January 1956, a meet held at the Boston YMCA used the Olympic press, the squat, and the deadlift as its events. That same year, the YMCA in St. Paul, Minnesota held a competition in which competitors performed the bench press, squat, and deadlift. This contest may be the first in history to include only the three modern powerlifts.³²

As interest continued to grow in non-weightlifting competitions, Rader and his ISA group began reaching out to amateurs as well as pros. According to Rader, this move stimulated the AAU to begin sponsoring its own odd-lift meets, often as an afterthought at weightlifting contests. By 1964, the AAU had begun formalizing plans for powerlifting to become an official part of AAU weightlifting’s governance structure. At an AAU meeting in June that year officials voted to remove the curl from the approved lifts from and to add a super-heavyweight class, which did not exist in weightlifting in this era. They also solidified plans for an unofficial national championships to be held in September 1964 called “The Powerlifting Tournament of America.”³³ The following year the first official AAU Senior National Powerlifting Championships was held in September at York, Pennsylvania.³⁴ The sport of powerlifting had finally arrived.

In the 1960s when the sport began and there were almost no providers of lifting equipment, the cos-

tumes of powerlifters widely varied. Although some lifters wore lightweight, stretchy wrestling and weightlifting singlets, other men competed in shorts and t-shirts rather than a one-piece suit. Shoes also ran the gamut from high-top basketball shoes to work boots, to wrestling and boxing shoes, and even to “dress shoes” that had not been manufactured with sport in mind. National champion Ronnie Ray, for example, wore leather loafers when he squatted.

An examination of the photographs accompanying Ralph Countryman’s article on the 1965 Senior National Championships in *Iron Man Lifting News* provides a good idea of the primitive state of competition clothing in this era. There are 43 photographs included with his report, and in 20 of the images the lifter is wearing only a singlet — or a singlet with a simple t-shirt — underneath it. In 23 photos, shorts and T-shirts can be seen, and not a lifting suit. In 28 photographs the men are wearing belts, all of which are narrow in front like the belts used in Olympic weightlifting. Only six men are wearing any kind of knee wraps, but the material appears to be similar to what we would now call an “Ace bandage” — the thin, elastic bandages used to wrap sprained ankles and other kinds of sport injuries.³⁵

Three short years later, at the 1968 Senior National Championships in Los Angeles, lifters had begun pushing the boundaries of supportive equipment. According to powerlifting author Ken Leistner, a number of methods for increasing lifts began emerging by that time. Leistner suggests, for example, that national champion Jerry Jones cut tennis balls in half, placed them behind his knees during the squat, and secured them in place with Ace bandages. Other lifters, he suggested, sewed two Ace bandages together to make longer wraps, as the rules permitted only one bandage per leg and did not set a length limit.³⁶

The most egregious offender at the 1968 meet was Californian Tom Overholzer who, in an attempt to increase his squat, reportedly wrapped his torso with bedsheets, covered the sheets with a layer of Ace bandages, and then put on his singlet.³⁷ As is often the case when a record is at stake, the quest to be first in his weight class to make some sort of “barrier weight,” such as a six-hundred-pound squat, is apparently what led Overholtzer to push the limits of gear so extravagantly. According to Leistner, “The judges moaned about the bedsheets but there was no official rule that prohibited any of this.”³⁸



Although he doesn't appear to be wearing any supportive gear in this deadlift shot, Tom Overholtzer was known for his use of Performance Enhancing Gear. He wrapped his torso in bedsheets and Ace bandages that he then covered with his singlet when he squatted 655 pounds in the 181-pound class at the 1968 Senior National Powerlifting Championships. Overholtzer's use of gear confounded the judges at the Seniors as the rules did not specifically state that such wraps were illegal.

Iron Game historian Herb Glossbrenner basically corroborates Leistner's account, as does *Powerlifting USA* editor Mike Lambert, who was critical of the excessive wrapping. "Despite the illegal wraps, a tremendous psyche, and probably steroids along with an upper or two; the minute the guy got the bar out of the rack he looked like he was going to die ... you know ... he's shaking... the bars shaking ... the plates are rattling ... the guy's face is purple ... he's surrounded by half a dozen nervous spotters," Lambert wrote.³⁹ Nevertheless, "with [Overholtzer's] lifting attire on you couldn't see any tell-tale seams from the wraps underneath," Lambert admitted.⁴⁰ However, according to Glossbrenner, because Overholtzer's hips and torso were wrapped so tightly, he was unable to walk. This meant that his handlers – one under each arm – had to carry him from the backstage warm-up area and out to the lifting platform and place him directly under the bar. At that point all he had to do was lift the bar up off the squat stands, wait while his helpers removed the squat stands, make his attempt, wait while the racks were replaced, and then have his spotters once again carry him offstage.⁴¹

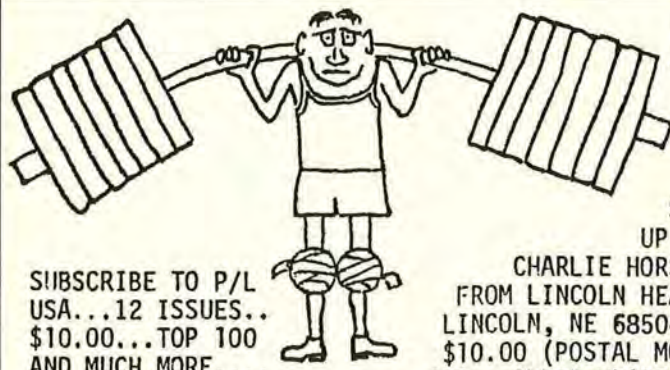
Overholtzer was not the only man attempting to get an edge from gear at the 1968 meet. Leistner reports

that in the bench press he saw "t shirts that went below the elbow, obscuring Ace bandages wrapped around the upper arms and/or chest area." Other men, he explained, wore blue jean shorts to aid their squat. Wrote Leistner, "it was the 'fashion' [among California lifters] to take a pair of very tight jeans . . . and cut them very short so they could be worn under a lifting singlet. Some guys wore two or more pair of these, one a size larger than the one beneath it."⁴²

Overholtzer's pushing of the limits sparked a debate that led to profound changes in the sport. In December, Peary Rader wrote an editorial in *Iron Man Lifting News*, titled "Power Lifting Dilemma," that decried the excessive use of supportive garments and wraps. "Although there were many exciting moments in the powerlifting championships," he wrote, "one of the most discouraging ... is the attempts of many lifters to cheat, in their lifts."⁴³ By "cheating," Rader referred specifically to the wrapping of bed sheets, as well as lifters wearing multiple pairs of cut-off jean shorts and using extra-wide, tight wraps around the knees and elbows. "We, as officials, found it necessary to go back and have them remove these pants and wraps so that they could conform more nearly to the rules," Rader explained. "However, it was a hopeless task, since as soon as we left the dressing room ... they would replace the wraps and come back in their original condition upon the platform to lift, and they were heard to brag in the back room about how they were fooling the officials ... Everyone we have talked to or who has talked to us regarding the power lift championships has been equally disappointed and disillusioned."⁴⁴ Rader did acknowledge, however, that most lifters did not go to such lengths, and commended those who had "the courage to come out and lift by the strength of their muscles alone without resorting to artificial aids."⁴⁵

Author Ralph Countryman, an attorney, writing in the 1969 issue of *Iron Man Lifting News*, agreed. Wrote Countryman,

The saddest news coming from this Seniors was the utter disregard for the rules or the spirit of the rules by a few lifters. The use of bandages, torso wraps, and braces, unauthorized lifting apparel to disguise this situation too, is a perversion of the rules that denies the lifter himself, as well as other lifters, the



KNEE WRAPS

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AND...SUPER WRAPS ARE BACK...ORDER FROM GEORGE ZANGAS, 6010 N. 74th ST., LOS ANGELES, CA 90045, 1 PR.-\$5.50, 2 PR.-\$10.00, 5 DOZ. OR MORE-\$4.00 A PR. (PERSONAL CHECKS OKAY).

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lifting.”⁴⁷

The images accompanying Countryman's 1968 meet report differ in significant ways from the pictures at the 1965 Senior Nationals. There are 50 photos in *Iron Man Lifting News* and in 22 of them the athletes are shown wearing knee wraps that appear to be more substantial and thicker than in the earlier set of images. Some men are also wearing what is now called a “knee sleeve,” that appears to be made of a dark, shiny material

resembling rubber. Knees were not the only joint wrapped, however. Nine individuals have their wrists wrapped, and two lifters have their elbows wrapped during bench press attempts. Thirty-five belts appear in the images and, like the wraps, some of the belts appear wider and thicker than the ones used in 1965. Although these may seem like relatively minor differences, they suggest that the quest to find supportive equipment to enhance performance in powerlifting dates to the very early years of the sport.⁴⁸

In November 1972, at the AAU National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, a unanimous vote of the National Weightlifting Committee banned all wraps and supportive devices in powerlifting. As reported by Clay Patterson in the December 1972 *Powerlifting News*, the new rule stated, “There will be no wraps, bandages, or supportive devices of any description except the standard lifting belt. This is a standard 3/8” thick belt, four inches wide worn around the waist.”⁴⁹ Additionally, the committee passed a rule that stated, “Any lifter completing a lift for a record will be immediately stripped backstage by the referees and checked for wrapping.”⁵⁰ They also voted at that meeting to participate in the newly formed International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) and to send a team to its first World Championships, scheduled for 1973.⁵¹

As might be expected, many lifters strongly opposed the ban on wraps. Dan DeWalt, publisher of the small journal, *Powerlifting News*, launched in March of 1972, featured the news on the cover of his December issue with a headline proclaiming, “‘NO WRAPS’ Rule

*pleasure of an honest victory in a legitimate test of strength. Some of these medals belong almost as much to Johnson & Johnson [Ed note: makers of Ace bandages] as they do to the lifter who accepted them (names are withheld to protect the guilty) ... The problem is really one of establishing clear-cut rules and giving them equal enforcement throughout the country. The lifters can't be blamed for going to the extent of the rules, although there will always be some who will stretch and press for additional advantage.*⁴⁶

However, Countryman continued, “The officials have to shoulder most of the blame for lack of uniform enforcement. Once one person has been allowed to bend the rule slightly, it is only just that others should try to gain the same advantage.” But Countryman cautioned that banning all equipment “merely makes it easy, and penalizes the lifter who is anxious to protect a strain or prevent one in a weak area. The fact that things have gone too far is evident in the immediate suspicion attached to anyone wearing a knee, elbow or wrist wrap or bandage.” As a potential solution, he argued for the adoption of clearly described lifting uniforms rules and the use of exact terms in order to limit future violations of the spirit of the rules. He concluded, “All of this sounds silly and perhaps needlessly proscriptive until you look at the procession of men in clown suits who make a mockery of



This photo of lifters in the 123 and 132 pound classes from the mid-1960s is a good example of the variety of clothing lifters wore on the platform in the early days of sport. Tanktops, t-shirts, narrow weightlifting belts, tight and loose shorts, singlets, work boots, and even loafers were all *de rigueur* before the AAU established uniform rules.

Passed — 220 lb. Class Ok'ed." Over the next several months, *Powerlifting News* readers like James Douglas Edward voiced their strong opposition to the loss of gear. "It actually took my breath to read that 'wraps' are no more," he wrote. "It's really very simple minded when you stop and think about it. Then I had to laugh as I read of our British lifters using 18 feet of wraps. Our 72" [of wraps] should be made mandatory rather than omitting them. Who the hell is responsible for making such a mistake? I bet this rule was made by people who are non-lifters."⁵² In the same issue, columnist Hollie Evett argued that wraps added to the safety of lifters, writing, "In many sports the first thing to go is the joints. Doesn't it make sense to add a little protection to them?" Evett went on, "The fallacy that injured athletes shouldn't compete is also very sad. Hugh Cassidy won the Senior Nationals and World Championships with a knee that needed surgery. He felt the rubber knee bands had been a blessing. ... Even if the wraps do increase performance, whether it's psychological or by increasing strength, who should care if one is allowed to use equal protection."⁵³ Other lifters expressed similar sentiments in the following months. In the March-April 1973 issue of *Powerlifting News*, Dave Krieg stated, "When I start-

ed powerlifting many years ago I sustained very serious injuries in both knees while performing limit squats without wraps. It was almost two years before I could squat again. When I resumed my squat routine I always used wraps, and the only time I have experienced knee pains is when I failed to use the wraps in the warm-up sets." Krieg believed that if he had used wraps initially, he would not have had an injury. His support for wraps was not unconditional, however, as he wrote, "The only beef I can see against wraps is the excessive length used by some lifters."⁵⁴

The moratorium on the use of gear proved to be short-lived. One year later, at the first IPF World Championships in York, Pennsylvania, the new federation adopted rules for appropriate costumes which then had to be followed by all member federations, including the AAU. *Muscular Develop-*

ment, Bob Hoffman's bodybuilding and powerlifting magazine, covered the first World Championships and printed the new rules adopted at the Congress. On the matter of uniforms, the IPF adopted the following rules pertinent to our discussion.

4. Lifters must appear in correct and tidy dress which must consist of a vest with short sleeves, trunks of a form fitting stretch material and athletic supporter; or alternatively of a full length costume with athletic supporter.
5. Proper lifting costume shall include shoes.
6. If a competitor wears a belt, its width must not exceed ten centimeters. (3 9/10 inches.) It is forbidden to wear more than one belt.

7. Bandages

(a) Rubber — Bandages or supports of rubber or rubber substitute are forbidden.

(b) Wrists — Bandages of gauze or medical crepe may be worn

with a maximum width of 8 cm. (3 1/8th inches) and a maximum length of one meter may be worn.

(c) Knees – Bandages of gauze or medical crepe may be worn with a maximum width of 8 cm. and a maximum length of two meters. (6 feet, 6 inches) Alternatively, an elastic knee-cap may be worn with a maximum length of 20 cm. (7.87 inches). A combination of the two is forbidden.

(d) Body – Bandages around the torso are forbidden. Spot plasters to muscle injuries may be applied by the official IPF doctor on duty.

...

(g) Bandages of any form on elbows are prohibited.⁵⁵

No doubt these early officials had hopes that the new uniform rules would level the playing field for all competitors. However, the establishment of an official IPF world record list proved a powerful incentive for lifters to once again look for that additional edge. And so, almost immediately, lifters began searching for materials to provide themselves with the greatest support possible within the letter of the new rules.

While Dan DeWalt's magazine carried virtually no advertising, during its first year of publication, in 1972, he gave a plug to the Sta-Slim company sellers of neoprene knee and elbow sleeves which he described as "useful items most called for by powerlifters."⁵⁶ De Welt ceased publication of his journal in late 1973 and for the next several years there was no specialized magazine covering powerlifting in the United States. The founding of *Powerlifting USA (PLUSA)* magazine by Mike Lambert in June 1977, however, changed things dramatically. *PLUSA* not only kept lifters up to date on meet news and records, it also provided a reliable advertising venue that over the years worked

sympiotically with the early gear entrepreneurs. Lambert's first issue carried only one ad for gear — an ad for knee wraps from powerlifter George Zangas of San Pedro, California. (Zangas' wraps were significantly stronger than the Ace bandages of earlier years.) Made of a heavy, highly elastic material that Zangas found through a medical supply company, they gave much more support to squatters and within a year, Ace bandages virtually disappeared from the sport.⁵⁷

Powerlifting legend Larry Pacifico, who began lifting in 1965 and eventually won nine IPF world titles, claimed in an interview with the authors to have created the first supportive powerlifting suit in either 1973 or 1974.⁵⁸ According to Pacifico, although the bed sheet episode was not something he wanted to replicate, he realized that the extra layers of fabric surrounding Overholtzer's body provided support to help him lift more weight and the incident gave Pacifico the idea of making a suit with thick fabric that would work similarly. As he tells the tale, he called Spanjian Sportswear, a company



In 1965, Terry Todd set a total record in the superheavyweight class at a meet in Tennessee, while wearing cut off sweat pants, a narrow lifting belt, and knee sleeves that he left on throughout the entire contest. On his feet, he wore Polish weightlifting shoes in the squat, deadlifted in his socks, and benched in his Hush Puppies loafers. Gene Roberson, who took second to Todd, competed in the long-sleeved sweat shirt and white gym shorts shown in this photo, taken at the weighing of the weights following Todd's record deadlift of 730 pounds.

that made wrestling singlets, and asked for their assistance in finding a fabric of heavier weight. Pacifico also wanted his new suits to have a longer leg, as most wrestling singlets were cut very high on the leg, close to the gluteus muscles. So Pacifico and Spanjian reached an agreement, and they sent Pacifico a few samples.⁵⁹ [Editor's Note: Pacifico gave one of these early prototype suits from Spanjian to author Jan Todd during her powerlifting career in the late 1970s. The straps were the same width as a narrow wrestling suit and the fabric was so stretchy that Todd used it as her "singlet" for bench and deadlift as well as squatting in the beginning of her career.]

Although the first fabrics were still fairly elastic, the company eventually found a stiffer canvas-type fabric that allowed lifters to improve their squats. Wearing one of the early suits, Pacifico stated, provided about 30 to 40 pounds of support at the bottom of a squat, a significant increase in performance. Pacifico recalled that he then began buying ten suits at a time from Spanjian in order to resell them to other lifters at the powerlifting meets he attended. Word of what he first called the Super Suit soon spread, and the potential of lifting heavier weights along with buying from a world champion led to big business for him. He began ordering 50 suits at a time, then 60, and soon he was purchasing one hundred suits at a time. Eventually, said Pacifico, "if I would attend the world championships abroad, I would take 500 suits with me, and they would be sold out within the first day."⁶⁰

With so much success, however, Pacifico's market soon became contested territory. In 1976, George Zangas outsmarted the champion by calling Spanjian and negotiating a deal that granted him exclusive rights to the suits that Pacifico had essentially designed. Spanjian agreed because Zangas offered to buy in bulk on a regular basis. Pacifico recalled, "He was smarter than I was. He got in and got a corner on the market."⁶¹

Pacifico, however, was also clever about business. He soon made a deal with Zangas to buy suits at the wholesale price, and in return, he allowed Zangas to use the name "Super Suit," which Pacifico had coined for the squat suit. According to Pacifico, the two men, who remained good friends, "pretty much became partners in the Super Suit business."⁶² Zangas sold suits under his Marathon company name, and Pacifico used his own name.⁶³ Pacifico estimated that together, he and Zangas sold between three thousand and four thousand suits per

year in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁶⁴

Zangas, who ran a health food store in San Pedro, California, and passed away in October 2011, was the first to advertise "Super Suits" in *Powerlifting USA* magazine.⁶⁵ Unlike Pacifico, who sold the suits mostly at meets, Zangas used *Powerlifting USA* to create a mail-order business based on his ability to ship suits out on demand. His first ad in the February 1978 issue not only noted that the suits were "Worn by the top champions!!!" but that they were also, "Now available from the manufacturer on a regular basis!" They sold for \$40.00 each.⁶⁶ Zangas' first generation of Super Suits were made of a heavy beige canvas-type material that had very little stretch to it. The beige suits were, frankly, unattractive, and so Zangas began dyeing the suits red, blue, and black, and found his sales grew exponentially. So did competition in this era, as several "cottage industries" emerged to feed the market for new forms of powerlifting gear. By the February 1980 issue of *Powerlifting USA*, ads for Weight Lifter's Warehouse, Lincoln Health Club, Pat's Power Products, and Strength Systems, all included squat suits and/or wraps for sale that were similar to those Zangas and Pacifico sold.

Titan Support Systems

One of these early "cottage" industries, Titan



Canadian powerlifter Peter Perry, wearing one of Larry Pacifico's early suits, suffered a "blow-out" in the squat at the 1979 World Powerlifting Championships in Dayton, Ohio. Blow-outs were very common in the early days of gear and inspired Pete Alaniz and his mother, Irma, to begin manufacturing Titan suits.

Support Systems, is now among the largest powerlifting equipment companies in the world. Pete Alaniz Jr., a co-founder of the company, had his first exposure to PEG at the 1978 Texas Novice State Championships at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. He had been training for approximately three years by that time, but had not heard of gear.⁶⁷

While Alaniz and his training partners were warming up in their standard attire – a singlet, some Ace bandages for knee wraps, and a lifting belt – they spotted a few lifters with different apparel. Several of the men had acquired first-generation Super Suits. As the lifters worked their way into their gear, a curious crowd gathered around them. What began as a warm-up quickly turned into a question and answer session as the geared lifters fielded queries about their cutting-edge equipment. Alaniz remembers clearly the impact of seeing these suits for the first time. “Once the squats started, a whole new era began for us,” he explained. “Most lifters had a pretty good idea of where they stood in the rankings and were also pretty familiar with their competition ... Now all of a sudden peers or those who we thought of as peers pulled ahead ... way ahead,” explained Alaniz. “The conclusion of our crew was that we had to modernize and level the playing field.”⁶⁸

As Alaniz tells it, he and his training partners bought suits of their own and after using them for a few months, he had a conversation with his mother that changed the course of his life. Alaniz’s mother, Irma, who understood sewing and was also very smart, pointed out some of the manufacturing flaws she saw in the suits. She believed, for example, that the straight stitching used by Spanjian was not optimal. She believed that the best stitch would be more like a zig-zag stitch that would move “in conjunction with the stretch of the fabric and body contours,” and would also “absorb, not fight stress” created while lifting. Additionally, she identified the weakness of the diamond-shaped piece of fabric, held in place by four seams, used in the construction of the crotch on Super Suits. Super Suits were famous for their often-embarrassing “blow-outs” in the bottom of the squat, and Irma also thought she knew how to fix that problem.⁶⁹

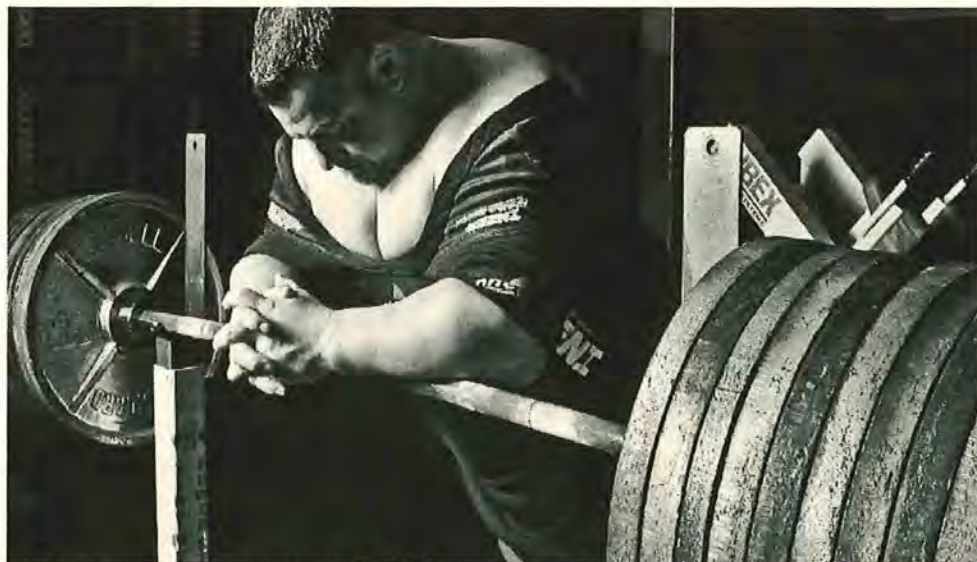
After talking about this within the Alaniz family for some time, the entire family decided to go into the Super Suit business in 1981. They set up shop in their garage in Corpus Christi, Texas. Pete’s grandmother bought and donated a \$200 sewing machine from Sears

to the company, and his uncle, a CPA, provided accounting advice.⁷⁰ Launching a new business, even a cottage industry run with family members, was a big challenge. The family initially financed the company by maxing out their credit cards. Later, when banks agreed to provide loans, they “had to pledge [their] autos, homes and bank accounts as collateral.” Despite these hardships, claimed Alaniz, “Our very first classified ad produced about \$3,000 in sales in the first month.” The company has grown steadily ever since.⁷¹

Inzer and the Bench Shirt Wars

Innovation in powerlifting gear was not limited to the squat suit, of course. The February 1980 issue of *Powerlifting USA* featured the first advertisement for a bench press shirt. Sold by J’s Gym in Statesboro, Georgia, the ad boasted that the shirt was “Worn at World Championships,” and “Makes for Increased Bench.”⁷² Made essentially like a T-shirt, but out of heavier fabric, the ad also told those responding to, “Please State your Weight for a Firm, Tight Fit.”⁷³

Other early entrepreneurs also began thinking about bench shirts and what they could mean for more gear sales, but it was powerlifter John Inzer who revolutionized bench pressing with an innovative shirt design he began marketing in 1973. Inzer’s early shirts were made of a heavy fabric that barely stretched at all and had the sleeves set in a more forward position to maximize the rebounding effect of the fabric in the bottom of the lift.⁷⁴ It appears that when Inzer went to patent his design he learned that New York fashion designer Gabriele Knecht already had a patent for clothing with armholes placed slightly forward of the midline of the body.⁷⁵ Knecht, who has no known connections to powerlifting, was not trying to invent a bench press shirt when she registered her design. However, by purchasing all her rights to that patent, Inzer was able to prevent any other company from creating bench shirts with a “forward sleeve” design.⁷⁶ Until 2002, when his patent expired, Inzer fiercely protected his rights to the Knecht design in court, making it essentially impossible for others to enter the bench shirt market.⁷⁷ Titan owner Pete Alaniz claimed, “Inzer definitely beat everyone to the punch by getting exclusive license. By the time our patent and trademark lawyer reached [Knecht] it was too late. We had been producing shirts a short time and were confident we had a superior design, but there was no way around the patent or the licensing agreement.” Given



The heaviest bench press on record — 1102 pounds — was made by Texan Paul “Tiny” Meeker in 2013. As can be seen, the “Inzer Phenom” bench shirt Meeker wore that day has an open back, and is cut low in the front so that the tightness of the fabric is concentrated across the center of the chest and shoulders where the shirt functions like a stretched slingshot.

their sales and the growth at the time, Alaniz said that the company “was on track to make its first big move in the late 80s.” However, rather than face lawsuits from Inzer, “the family voted to wait for the patent to expire and move into the public domain. We knew it would be a long wait and that we would be in a disadvantaged position, but we decided to wait it out and adapt meanwhile.”⁷⁸

According to Larry Pacifico, Inzer was also smart about attending powerlifting organizational meetings, getting to know the rule makers, and thereby helping to pave the way for the acceptance of his suits and shirts which have required numerous rule changes to be considered legal in the various federations. He also traveled to many of the countries where powerlifting was most popular to convince IPF decision makers to allow his various versions of the bench press shirt into competition. While a few bench shirts continued to be marketed that lacked the sleeve placement of Inzer’s shirts, those products faded in the face of the superiority of Inzer’s design.⁷⁹ Said Pacifico, “John was a very smart guy... once [he] got into the business, it put pretty much everybody out of business.”⁸⁰

Concluding Thoughts on PEG

These days the amount of assistance bench shirts provide depends on far more than just forward sleeve placement. Bench press great Ted Arcidi wore one of the

first models of the bench press shirt when he broke the 700-pound barrier in the bench press on 3 March 1985 in Honolulu, Hawaii.⁸¹ However, like many early lifters Arcidi still feels the need to qualify his lift based on the modern records made with stronger gear: “Back in the mid-1980s the original prototype supportive bench press shirt was 50% polyester and 50% cotton and only one layer thick. It was more like a sweater and not at all like the laminated four or five layers thick armor suit that many powerlifters use today.”⁸²

Arcidi is correct. In the twenty-first century the heaviest bench presses are made with heavily constructed shirts like Inzer’s new “SDP Phenom.” The Phenom has an open back that allows for a much better range of motion than the old shirts that had full backs as well as full fronts. In the Phenom and the Jack Shirt — made by the gear company Metal, and other shirts like it — the shirt is not truly worn, it is merely fitted across the front of the torso so that it functions like a slingshot rather than a piece of clothing. The heaviest bench on record, made in a Phenom, now stands at 1102 pounds. Paul “Tiny” Meeker, of Texas, set the new standard in 2013.⁸³

In the late 1990s an anti-gear movement began to gather force within powerlifting and a Raw National Championships, sanctioned by the AAU, was held for the first time in August 1996. Although only 40 lifters competed in this first contest, powerlifting official Joe Pyra believed that “It opened the way for more RAW meets in the future by showing the lifters what is doable and that fair/good RAW competition is available.”⁸⁴ Pyra proved prescient. Raw lifting is by far the fastest growing form of the sport of powerlifting. The USAPL sanctioned its own Raw Nationals in 2008; 12 women and 77 men competed in that contest.⁸⁵ Six years later, 1,147 competitors turned up at the 2015 Raw Nationals in Scranton, Pennsylvania, which offered men’s, women’s, teenage, and masters divisions.⁸⁶ Further evidence of the growing popularity of raw lifting emerged at the 2015

Longhorn Open Powerlifting Championships in Austin, Texas, where, according to meet director Kim Beckwith, 100 out of the 118 lifters in that meet chose to compete raw.⁸⁷

These differing approaches to powerlifting – geared versus raw – demonstrate two radically different philosophies utilized in the sport. At the USPF Women's Nationals Powerlifting Competition in 1982, Brother Bennett, founder of the American Drug Free Powerlifting Association, stated, "sports [serve] the purpose of developing and training the body to maintain and make effective use of our physical abilities ... improvement and success in sports can be a gratifying experience."⁸⁸ Conversely, Louie Simmons, a staunch opponent of drug testing and an outspoken advocate for supportive equipment, asserted, "until the end of time people will seek out a way to win. That's human nature. Most use computers today, not an ink quill."⁸⁹

Although contests such as the 2015 Longhorn Open suggest that Simmons's comment about human nature is far too dogmatic, those who subscribe to his "anything goes" view are reluctant to accept limits on an athlete's performance.⁹⁰ From their perspective, sport's goal is to transcend limits by any means necessary.⁹¹ Gear advocates hold that athletic competitions are like scientific experiments — controlled environments for manipulating test subjects and discovering new phenomena.⁹²

However, what we would call the traditional or purist view seems to be gaining ground. This view, first espoused by Peary Rader in 1968, argued for powerlifting to be a sport in which lifters had, "the

Table 2. Average Lifts as % of 1960s Lifts for Top 10 Male U.S. Lifters

Weight Class	Squat			
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
123	100%	122%	135%	130%
132	100%	112%	130%	121%
165	100%	128%	144%	143%
181	100%	123%	141%	134%
198	100%	118%	128%	131%
242	100%	114%	127%	136%
SHW	100%	123%	131%	130%
Avg. All Classes	100%	120%	136%	136%
Weight Class	Bench Press			
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
123	100%	112%	112%	110%
132	100%	109%	114%	111%
165	100%	115%	122%	118%
181	100%	109%	130%	120%
198	100%	103%	124%	98%
242	100%	111%	104%	126%
SHW	100%	114%	111%	121%
Avg. All Classes	100%	110%	118%	118%
Weight Class	Deadlift			
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
123	100%	119%	107%	110%
132	100%	107%	115%	106%
165	100%	113%	120%	119%
181	100%	123%	131%	126%
198	100%	116%	120%	114%
242	100%	112%	119%	117%
SHW	100%	110%	114%	108%
Avg. All Classes	100%	114%	118%	115%
Weight Class	Total			
	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
123	100%	118%	118%	117%
132	100%	109%	120%	112%
165	100%	118%	129%	127%
181	100%	119%	135%	128%
198	100%	113%	124%	116%
242	100%	113%	118%	126%
SHW	100%	116%	120%	119%
Avg. All Classes	100%	115%	125%	123%

courage to come out and lift by the strength of their muscles alone." Lifters subscribing to the purist positions make an ethical choice to not use the most supportive forms of gear.⁹³ They believe that questions such as "Which suit was he wearing?" or "Which knee wraps did she use?" should not obscure one's understanding of the reasons for any successful lift.

The assertion that gear undoubtedly increases the weights that individual athletes are capable of lifting is not debatable.⁹⁴ This became very clear in 2006, on the campus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, when the Atlantis Foundation and Brand 33 Sports put on the New England Record Breakers raw powerlifting meet to explore the gear question. As reported by Mike Lambert in the July 2006 issue of *Powerlifting USA*, "the question underlying this competition was 'What can those big guys lift without the gear?'"⁹⁵ With Bill Kazmaier announcing, and former champions Ed Coan, Jan Todd, and Terry Todd as judges, Brian Siders placed first with a 2200-pound total at a bodyweight of 339 pounds. His lifts in the squat, bench, and deadlift were 785, 605, and 810, respectively. Donnie Thompson was not far behind with a 2170 total while weighing 374 pounds. His marks were 805, 565, and 800 pounds. Lambert wrote that the aforementioned question "was answered rather clearly in the case of Brian Siders, who just 2 weeks earlier had totaled 2577 at the Quest American Open, and Donnie Thompson showed a similar differential over his best in equipped circumstances."⁹⁶ However, despite the

impressive strength Siders demonstrated, the almost four hundred pound discrepancy between Siders's raw numbers and his equipped numbers dramatically demonstrates the effects of supportive equipment.

Lambert also commented on the performance of Mike Wolfe, who bench pressed over 800 pounds in an equipped meet before the Record Breakers, yet made only 600 pounds in Springfield. This is not to say that the raw lifts of Wolfe, Siders and Thompson are not impressive; they are very impressive. However, the discrepancies between the amounts they lifted in gear and without do demonstrate the kinds of increases possible with supportive equipment.⁹⁷

A far more astonishing example of the role played by gear was provided by Mike Miller, a super-heavyweight whose lifetime best squat, done of course in a geared contest, was 1220 pounds. When the lifting began and Kazmaier announced that Mike Miller was going to take his first squat with 600 pounds, many in the auditorium were astonished. No one expected Miller to come anywhere close to a 1200-pound squat, but for him to take less than half of his official best squat seemed unbelievable to those who were there. In an interview before he agreed to join the writing team for this article, Terry Todd told Dominic Morais, "I watched him carefully to be sure he went low enough, but both Jan and I — sitting on opposite sides of the lifter — turned him down for not going down far enough. (Eddie Coan, the head judge, saw the lift as good, but the lift failed two to one.) At that point I wondered if he'd take the same weight again, which is normal if you miss your first attempt, and that's what he did. Once again we watched, and this time he got just a bit lower and the lift was passed, two to one. I was very surprised, however, to see that his 600 squat didn't look at all easy, and further surprised that he asked for 800 pounds for his final attempt. With 800 on the bar — over 400 pounds less than his geared best — Miller didn't even come close to completing the lift, even though his depth was even worse than his first attempt."

Using statistical data compiled by Herb Glossbrenner for *Powerlifting USA*, we examined performance data and averaged the weights lifted by the top ten U.S. male lifters in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s to see the effect of increased gear use in the sport.⁹⁸ We are aware that this admittedly unscientific survey cannot account for: 1) the refinement of technique and training;

2) the gradual easing of judging standards over the years; and 4) the occasional outlier or phenomenon of strength who appears and rewrites the records books. However, with these caveats in mind, Table 2 nonetheless bolsters the evidence that supportive gear clearly affects the amount of weight lifted in powerlifting. As shown, our examination of percentage changes from the 1960s, when the use of gear by lifters was limited and/or in its nascent stage, to the 1990s is staggering. First, the poundages in the squat increased by at least 30 percent in virtually every weight class, while the bench and deadlift experienced no more than a 15 percent increase. That the far greater performance increase occurred in the lift that utilizes the most gear is no coincidence. Second, comparing these increases in performance to increases in other sports is intriguing. For example, the decrease in time of Usain Bolt's 2008 world record 100-meter dash compared to Jarvis Frank's world record time 108 years earlier — in 1900 — is approximately 11 percent.⁹⁹ In a sport with limited performance-enhancing clothing or equipment, it can be assumed that these records demonstrate maximum human performance in the 100-meter dash at the time. Therefore, the extraordinary percentage increases experienced in powerlifting are almost certainly due to something other than just human capability. Although one might attribute this difference to the use of anabolic steroids, track and field is also a sport associated with performance enhancing drugs, and so to suggest that steroids alone are the cause of such widely varying increases is implausible.¹⁰⁰ *Our analysis demonstrates that PEG (performance enhancing gear) has played a far more significant role than PEDs (performance enhancing drugs) have played.*

These are not the only numbers that testify to the performance-enhancing characteristics of supportive gear and equipment. In comparing "male open raw records" to "male open equipped records" in the International Powerlifting Federation, which drug tests at all its competitions, the performance-enhancing effect of gear can also be seen (see Table 3). Although the possibility exists that better lifters may choose to lift with gear more often, the end result remains the same: the discrepancy between raw and equipped records is so marked that it demonstrates the performance-enhancing effect of gear.

As we suggested at the beginning of this essay, we are not attempting to solve the ethical questions related to the use of gear here. However, we cannot help wondering what the future of powerlifting will hold. Our

Table 3. IPF Raw & Equipped World Records by Lift

	Raw		Equipped		Difference	%
Weight Class	Lifter	Weight Lifted	Lifter	Weight Lifted		
SQUAT						
59kg	Fedosienko Sergey	498.2	Fedosienko Sergey	661.4	163.2	33%
66kg	Cascioli Stephen	530.2	Danilov Konstantin	718.7	188.5	36%
74kg	Hancott Josh	573.2	Olech Jaroslaw	810.2	237	41%
83kg	Gibbs Brett	628.3	World Standard	815.7	187.4	30%
93kg	Norton Layne	668	World Standard	870.8	202.8	30%
105kg	Raus Alex-Edward	727.5	Semenenko Dmytro	914.9	187.4	26%
120kg	Bouafia Mohamed	826.7	World Standard	948	121.3	15%
120+kg	Williams Ray	938.1	Christensen Carl Yngvar	1080.3	142.2	15%
BENCH PRESS						
59kg	Fedosienko Sergey	374.8	Fedosienko Sergey	443.1	68.3	18%
66kg	Berglund Eddie	402.3	World Standard	485	82.7	21%
74kg	Poinson Adrien	464.1	Poinson Adrien	540.1	76	16%
83kg	Gibbs Brett	453	Bakkelund Kjell Egil	575.4	122.4	27%
93kg	Cieri Dennis	512.6	Wegiera Jan	661.4	148.8	29%
105kg	Brown Leon	488.3	Dovganyuk Vadym	712.1	223.8	46%
120kg	Hokkanen Timo	518.1	Bilican Orhan	735.2	217.1	42%
120+kg	Boughalem Ilyes	596.3	Sandvik Kenneth	817.9	221.6	37%
DEADLIFT						
59kg	Fedosienko Sergey	596.3	World Standard	606.3	10	2%
66kg	Savolainen Antti	612.9	El Belghiti Hassan	690	77.1	13%
74kg	Meiyanto Doni	684.5	Gaishinets Sergei	722	37.5	5%
83kg	Fazeli Amir	696.7	Martin Tomas	760.6	63.9	9%
93kg	Wierzbicki Krzysztof	821.2	Gunhamn Erik	816.8	-4.4	-1%
105kg	Krawczyk Bryce	756.2	Coimbra Anibal	854.3	98.1	13%
120kg	Tuchscherer Michael	819	Barkhatov Maxim	854.3	35.3	4%
120+kg	Gillingham Brad	826.7	Gillingham Brad	876.3	49.6	6%
TOTAL						
59kg	Fedosienko Sergey	1457.3	Fedosienko Sergey	1677.7	220.4	15%
66kg	Aryanto Viki	1440.7	Gladikh Sergey	1796.8	356.1	25%
74kg	Hrynkevich-Sudnik	1570.8	Olech Jaroslaw	1995.2	424.4	27%
83kg	Gibbs Brett	1764.8	Bakkelund Kjell Egil	2077.9	313.1	18%
93kg	Wierzbicki Krzysztof	1868.4	Inzarkin Dmitry	2204.6	336.2	18%
105kg	Belkin Yury	1912.5	Dovganyuk Vadym	2316	403.5	21%
120kg	Bouafia Mohamed	2083.4	Rokochiy Oleksiy	2370	286.6	14%
120+kg	Summer Blaine	2210.1	Christensen Carl Yngvar	2711.7	501.6	23%

prediction is that the recent and enormous growth of raw lifting probably means that one-ply lifting may well fade in popularity, leaving raw and fully-gear lifting on each end of the spectrum. However, to return to our auto racing metaphor, we do not see gear totally disappearing, because like the love of high-end speed, the human fascination with maximal performance, even technologically enhanced performance, remains unquenchable. There are gear-heads in auto-racing just as there are gear-heads in powerlifting; both are fascinated by the technology available to them.

Whether powerlifting will continue to be considered a "human sport" like track and field and Olympic weightlifting, however, deserves further consideration. We can appreciate the technology of auto-racing because the autos are the athletes. In equipped powerlifting — which continues to become more extreme — we *transform* performance through what French philosopher Jacques Ellul would call "technique."¹⁰¹ (Ellul's *The Technological Society* was a philosophical exploration of the possible impact of technology on our future.) Ellul defined technique broadly, writing not only about machines and technical devices, but also about a

mindset he saw emerging in the mid-twentieth century. He believed that this particular aspect of technique — the desire to be faster, stronger, more efficient, and so on — was outgrowing human control and would make it impossible to control individual technologies.¹⁰² Geared powerlifting certainly seems to fit Ellul's definition. The "strength of the muscles alone," does not really matter to many powerlifters; what fires their imagination is what miraculous performances muscle and PEG can produce together.

Editors' Note: As historians and former lifters who embrace sport for more traditional reasons — the love of competition, the pleasure of achievement, and for what sport teaches us about our human limits — we wonder if future historians will one day write about this era of rampant gear in powerlifting and ask: "Why weren't geared powerlifters sufficiently self-aware to realize that the only people who didn't shake their heads and smile at them — with their bodies imprisoned inside their amazing gear — were their geared brethren?" And, "How did they fail to notice that they had become not musclebound but gear-bound?"

*The brilliant amateur historian of strength David P. Willoughby, who specialized in comparing men and women of different sizes, eras, and even different lifts or feats of strength, reviled the effect of anabolic steroids, which laid waste to his lifetime study of the comparison of human capabilities regardless of date, feat, and body size. Near the end of his long and productive life, Willoughby witnessed the coming of Performance Enhancing Gear," and told us in the late 1970s that he feared, "These new suits may have a greater effect on records than even steroids had."*¹⁰³

Willoughby's fears appear justified. Tiny Meeker's PEG-assisted bench press of 1102 pounds (500 kilos) is 286 pounds more than the IPF world record in the deadlift, the lift which — prior to the coming of supportive gear — always allowed a lifter to far exceed the poundage of his heaviest bench press, and almost always allowed a lifter to exceed his highest poundage in the squat.

Even so, over the past few years we've witnessed something far more significant than a simple turning of the tide. We've seen a sea change. How else can we explain the astonishing number of raw lifters at the USAPL Raw Nationals, and that of the 118 lifters in the 2015 Longhorn Open 100 of them lifted raw. Could it be that PEG will go the way of the corset?

NOTES

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4. Stewart Ross, *Sport Technology* (London: Evans Brothers, 2010), 11–12, 15.
5. We understand that some similar sports — such as weightlifting — are part of the Olympic family, and that membership in that family confers significant prestige and economic advantage that mandate the existence of only one federation and set of rules.
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- 10.
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WEIGHING THE OPTIONS: CONVERSATIONS ON THE USE OF PERFORMANCE ENHANCING GEAR IN POWERLIFTING

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The subject of supportive gear in powerlifting has been controversial from the earliest days in the sport. While our article “Shifting Gear,” also in this issue, provides an historical overview of the use of powerlifting gear, we came to believe as we were working on it that including the voices of active and retired powerlifters would broaden our understanding of this debate. Accordingly, we interviewed a number of individuals with different backgrounds in the sport in order to explore their attitudes and experiences with gear. Our hope is that their thoughts on this important topic will help readers develop a more nuanced understanding of the issue, and that even those well-versed in the sport may find a fresh perspective.¹ This essay is not intended to provide an unequivocal answer, or “solution” to the “gear debate.” Our hope, however, is that it enriches the previous piece by providing more perspectives, and demonstrates the complexity of the issue for active lifters.



Kim Beckwith, who teaches at The University of Texas at Austin, is a USAPL national referee, was named USAPL collegiate coach of the year in 2014, and won three “best lifter” titles at three consecutive national collegiate championships during her undergraduate years. She also promotes the Longhorn Open Powerlifting contest each November, and is not fond of powerlifting gear. From the perspective of a powerlifting meet director and a national-level referee, Beckwith believes that over the years gear has increased the potential for harm to lifters. As she explained, when competitors wear a bench press shirt the margin for error when completing the lift nar-

rows significantly. The bench press shirt dictates the path — or “groove” — the bar must follow as it descends to the chest and then ascends during the effort to complete the lift. Therefore, because bench shirts are constructed in such a way that they can catapult the bar toward the lifter’s face, the lifter may lose control of the bar as it moves out of this narrowed path. Because of this Beckwith — as a referee, coach, and as a meet director — worries “that the shirts are dangerous. I know they help, but unless technique is perfect, a lot of people lose lifts and lose control of the bar because they can’t move their arms freely.”²

Beckwith now “empathizes with older lifters,” she went on to say, who often “qualified their own lifting records by mentioning they were completed when lifters did not wear squat suits or bench shirts.” Early in her career, Beckwith explained, she did not fully understand what they were talking about. However, now that some of her own former records pale in comparison to modern lifts done with the newer, “improved” forms of gear, she better appreciates their justifications. Said Beckwith, “nowadays the equipment does a lot of the lifting for you and the older I get the more I understand this.”³ As the longtime coach of the Longhorn Powerlifting Team at the University of Texas, Beckwith works primarily with athletes who use gear, as the USAPL Collegiate Nationals only recently decided to offer a raw division. Said Beckwith, “I understand that these questions relate to the inclusion of technology in sport and that there are ethical issues here. But for me, as a coach, I wish they’d disallow all gear, move back to one set of records, and have only one kind of powerlifting. It would be a lot less expensive for students who want to get involved and I also think it would be more fun. Putting on a bench shirt for a woman lifter is no fun at all — no matter what she

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benches when wearing it.”⁴

Nine-time world powerlifting champion Larry Pacifico believes that the use of gear may have negatively affected powerlifting’s popularity as well. During the 1970s and 1980s powerlifting meets were often televised, Pacifico explained, but “once the bench press shirts and all this stuff became part of the rules, the networks just dropped it like crazy. They thought it was silly.” In response, Pacifico, who did color commentary for several nationally-televised powerlifting contests in the late 1970s and early 1980s, said he called NBC and talked to Bryant Gumbel as well as Bob Costas in hopes of changing their minds. They wouldn’t budge, and told him that the sport had changed too much and that with the shirts and supportive equipment, it was almost like pro-wrestling.⁵

Strength coach and former powerlifter Kevin Yoxall, currently serving as vice-president of the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association, is also opposed to the use of gear.⁶ Yoxall began competing in powerlifting in college during the early 1980s and continued into the mid-1990s, achieving regional and state honors. Yoxall had an epiphany regarding gear, he explained, when he saw three-time 242-pound world champion Doug Young bench press a world record 600 pounds in just a T-shirt. Yoxall said, “After watching Big Doug, I swore never to wear a bench shirt.”⁷ However, like many involved in the Iron Game, Yoxall went on to admit that he can see both sides of the issue. “If I had continued to compete and it got to the point where I was going to the meets and I was paying an entry fee and I was walking away with nothing because I wasn’t winning, yeah, I may have [used a bench shirt],” he continued, reminding his interviewer that the desire to set records and win contests “is what drives competitors” in powerlifting — and other sports — and can lead to new technological innovations.

Yoxall stated, “The idea of supportive gear started innocently enough in terms of helping the lifter out.” In talking about his own experiences, he added, “I’ve pulled [squat suit] straps up on others where I was literally standing on top of a bench or a chair using needle nose pliers to grip them.” However, he continued, “I never got to that point. But [my suits] did get tighter and tighter ... and they were getting increasingly more and more uncomfortable. I can remember finishing my last squat attempt, and I might have been happy if I PR’d, but the only thing on my mind was, ‘I need to get this SOB

off.’”⁸

Yoxall also discussed his strategy regarding suits when prepping for a meet. He explained, “The majority of my training cycles would begin with just a belt and then I would begin to add wraps as I got heavier and deeper in the cycle. I generally didn’t wear my suits until about the last three weeks of my training cycle, and I remember it being a great confidence builder in knowing you could handle heavy weights.” Yoxall then explained that new suits have changed this type of strategy. He said, “The way I understand it now, with some of these suits you have to spend the entire time training in them because they change the way you squat. You’ve really got to be well versed in a certain groove to wear a certain suit. I’ve heard stories about how guys wear a certain amount of plies [layers] early in their training cycle and then they get to the heavier ply later on.”⁹

Even though he recognizes that he was aided in the performance of his lifts, Yoxall, like most lifters who have used any level of gear, acknowledged the effort he put into his training. “I’m still proud of those lifts because there was a lot of training that went into producing those lifts. Now did supportive gear aid in that? Well, hell yeah, it did. But I was still also the guy in the gym working out. There were things about it that helped, but I know I was still working my ass off too.”¹⁰

Yoxall, who no longer competes, said, “as far as having an opinion about it, to me it’s like football equipment ... my only thought has always been, ‘Where does it all end?’ When is it almost to the point where the support gear is so supportive, that it takes over and the lifter is not actually doing it?” Yoxall then added, “All that being said, all these guys that can squat over 1000 pounds, they are damn strong. But when does it come to a point where somebody is more or less operating a forklift, so to speak?”¹¹ It is interesting to note that Yoxall went on to say that if he ever competed again in powerlifting, he would compete raw.

Jill Mills, regarded by many as one of the strongest women in history for having won the 2001 and 2002 World’s Strongest Woman Contests and setting numerous world records in powerlifting, touched on many of the same points as Yoxall. She started competing in powerlifting in 1995, but chose to use supportive equipment in her early meets because no raw divisions existed. “Back then ... *Powerlifting USA* came out with rankings, and when I would see my numbers, they wouldn’t ever say, ‘This was done raw.’ There was no

division in the rankings, so my numbers would be under someone else's, even though I knew I was stronger."¹² Mills, who has competed and set records both with and without supportive equipment, backed her assertion, becoming the 181-pound raw national champion of the American Powerlifting Federation (APF) in 1998 and 1999, and the 165-pound raw national champion in 2003. But the question remains unanswered for many athletes who compete exclusively in equipped divisions.

Mills made the decision to use gear to be competitive, but lamented some of its effects. "I think [equipment] takes a lot of fun out of it," she said. "People stress about it until the last minute. Are they going to be able to touch [their chests with the bar] in their bench shirt? Are they going to be able to hit parallel in their squat? It's nerve-racking... You have this equipment, you're worried about getting it on, how it's going to fit – it really complicates the situation."¹³ And today, says Mills, the situation is exacerbated compared to seven years ago. "The material was so *different*. I pulled out some of my old squat suits from ten or maybe eleven years ago, and I showed it to one of my young clients. She thought it was my singlet!"¹⁴ When the equipment used today is so vastly dissimilar from that in the past, one wonders whether the sport itself can be compared across eras. If not, records – one of the hallmarks of modern sport – begin to lose significance.

Mills also spoke about issues that female lifters face when choosing whether to compete in equipped divisions. "As uncomfortable as the equipment is for men, it's probably twice as uncomfortable for women, because it's not made for us. It twists your breasts; it's just miserable."¹⁵ In this case, access to equipment is not truly equal. Female lifters are effectively limited because gear designed for female lifters does not exist. Women can lift in men's gear, but only at the cost of additional discomfort from an already unpleasantly tight squat suit or bench shirt.

There were sometimes benefits, however, from using the equipment other than remaining competitive. Mills says that her first bench shirt helped her overcome a shoulder injury by taking some pressure off of the joint during her lifts. And Titan Support Systems and Inzer Advanced Designs, two of the major powerlifting equipment suppliers in the world, have made it possible for many lifters to get involved in the sport through their sponsorship of athletes. On the whole, though, Mills favors raw lifting. When it comes to equipment, she



As an undergraduate, Kim Beckwith was a three-time winner at the American Drug Free National Championships and she was also chosen as the best pound-for-pound female lifter each year. Beckwith is currently a faculty member in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education at the University of Texas where she also coaches the Longhorn Powerlifting Team, promotes the Longhorn Open Powerlifting Championships each November, and referees dozens of meets each year for the USAPL federation. In 2014 she was honored as USAPL Collegiate Coach of the Year. She is also the associate editor of *Iron Game History*.

says, "It's one of those things ... I've always felt like the less, the better."¹⁶

USAPL bench press world record holder in the junior division, Preston Turner, complicated the matter even more by providing a different perspective on powerlifting gear. He asserted that geared lifting and raw lifting are essentially two different events because geared and raw lifters usually do not compete in the same division. Turner claimed, "There is always a misconception that anyone can just throw on a bench shirt and lift 700 pounds or more. This could not be further from the truth. Powerlifting gear adds another very big technical aspect that makes the sport so much more difficult than lifting without." He added, "I have competed both raw and equipped, and there is a huge difference in the type of training, focus, and technicality in equipped lifting." In discussing this altered technique of geared versus raw lifting, Turner alluded to what scholars call re-skilling,



Jill Mills, one of the strongest women in history, has competed both with and without PEG during her career in powerlifting. At present, Mills primarily trains and competes as a raw lifter as she found using gear was taking the fun out of the sport. In a meet in January 2015 Mills set a new raw record in the deadlift of 243 kilos (535 pounds) while weighing only 163 in the United States Powerlifting Association (USPA).

which is increasing the complexity of a certain skill or job.¹⁷

Turner then explained how he views powerlifting gear. "I always think of equipped lifting in terms of other sports," said Turner. "In baseball, a player wears a glove to enhance his ability to catch the ball. He can catch the ball without a glove, but the sport allows a glove. The same goes for cleats in sports like football and soccer; the athletes can run just fine with flat shoes, but the cleats enhance their ability to accelerate and turn. The same goes for caps and swimming, and a large list of other equipment in sports." He then made it clear, "I cannot put on any of the gear I mentioned above and compete with the professionals. The same goes for powerlifting; people cannot just 'throw on' the powerlifting gear and expect to lift the amount of weight the top in the game do. It is not magic." He reiterated that the playing

field is even in terms of powerlifting gear as there are different divisions of raw, singly ply, and multi-ply, each with its own meticulous equipment specifications. Because of this, he said, "It then comes down to factors always involved in sports: genetics, work ethic, consistency, and determination."¹⁸

When asked about his recent consideration of lifting raw, Turner summarized his thoughts on the raw versus geared debate. He explained that he is considering raw lifting because although geared lifting has reigned supreme in powerlifting, raw is where the sport is headed, and he wants to compete against the best competition. Turner summed up his view of the issue with a firm statement: "Strong is strong, and the strong will succeed in both equipped and raw, because like I said, the gear is not magic."¹⁹

Although Louie Simmons shares some of Turner's opinions, he is more outspoken and extreme in his views. A well-known advocate for supportive gear, Simmons owns Westside Barbell Club, an invitation-only gym that has produced large numbers of elite powerlifters. In an article by Simmons in *Powerlifting USA* titled, "Equipment: Never Looking Back," he wrote, "It's not the equipment that makes a champion, but rather your mind. There is really no reason for the controversy over power gear." He then provided an example of his assertion: "When Fred Boldt came to Westside, he used a poly shirt. It took 3 months for him to master a double denim. In his first meet, he did 450, but within a year he made 540 in the same shirt. Where did the 90 pounds come from? Training."²⁰ The "poly shirt" and "double denim" that Simmons mentioned are different types of bench press shirts, and Simmons asserted that whether or not gear is used, the athletes must train in order to become stronger.

In the same article, Simmons explained that he

sees no issue with gear because there has always been a push for a competitive edge in powerlifting. He explained that lifters have always searched for ways to gain an advantage. "I remember 20 years ago some knee wraps had a rubber lining. Bill Kazmaier had a pair of shoes that were supposed to be worth \$1000," he said. He then told a story about Fred Hatfield — known to many in powerlifting as Dr. Squat — at the 1979 North American Championships in Canada. Simmons wrote, "[Hatfield] showed up at the equipment check with a pair of knee wraps make (*sic*) of jock strap waist bands. The IPF ref looked at them and said he couldn't wear them. They were twice as thick as normal wraps. But Fred won the argument and proceeded to break Ron Collins' world record squat." This was not the only notable action by Hatfield at the meet. Simmons explained, "[Hatfield] also had the squat rack pulled out of his way instead of walking the weight out. Was he cheating or innovative? Being a lifter, I thought he was innovative."²¹

Simmons unapologetically champions the use of powerlifting gear, as he views it as progress. In comparing powerlifting to other sports, he wrote, "Powerlifting is years behind other sports as far as equipment is concerned, including swimming, track, football, and even bowling ... The racing association made recommendations for a better safety belt harness after Dale Earnhardt's death. But in powerlifting when new innovations come about we're cheating? This doesn't make sense."²² Simmons stands firm by his beliefs, and many support his assertion that we will always find ways to win.

It is interesting, however, that some lifters who spent time training under Simmons at Westside Barbell — and embraced his philosophy — have since altered their views. Brandon Lilly, who is still ranked highly in both raw and geared powerlifting federations, is one of Simmons' former pupils.²³ Lilly expressed his disillusionment with supportive gear after realizing that his idea of "strong" differed from what he embodied as an equipped lifter.

At 19 years of age, as a 220-pound lifter Lilly was able to squat 660 pounds with only a weight belt. Ten years later — and 90 pounds heavier — Lilly squatted over 1000 pounds using a squat suit. However, he also found that he was then unable to squat 650 pounds without gear. "That for me was the end point," said Lilly. "I couldn't lie to myself anymore and continue to lift in the gear ... I felt like I was dis-servicing myself, because

I was putting so much emphasis on the gear that I was detracting from my physical body."²⁴

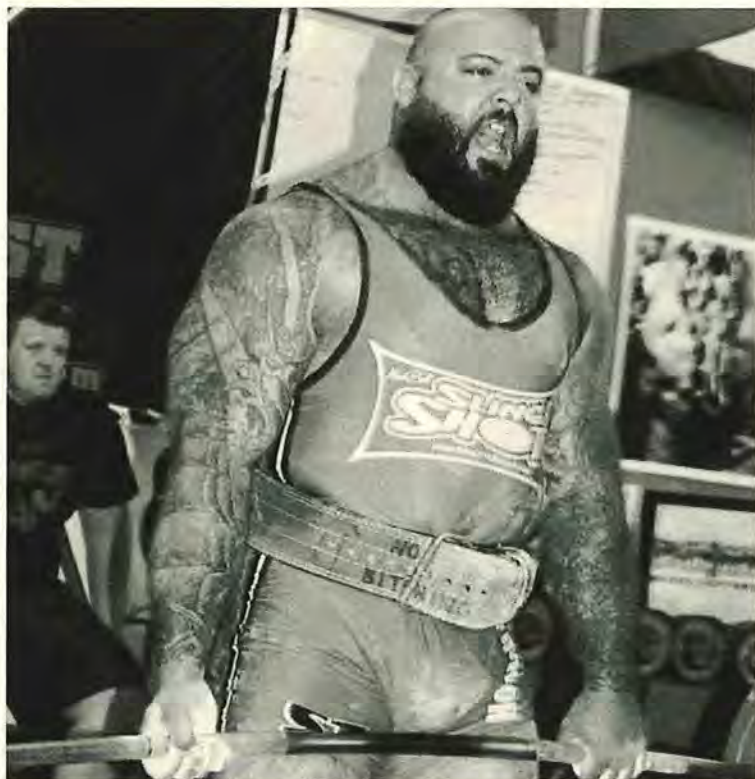
As Lilly explained, he began lifting weights with the original goals of becoming bigger, stronger, more muscular, and more athletic. As time went on and he continued lifting and training in supportive equipment, however, he found himself far from those aims. After this realization, he altered his training with the idea of becoming more well-rounded and functional as a lifter. He said, "To me, the way that I look now, the way that I feel now, has been a look and a feeling that I have strived for since I was an 18-year-old kid and had just started lifting. I was so far away from that as a geared lifter. And I'm not more proud of the way that I lift, because I lifted with everything that I had when I did gear. It's just that I'm closer to the original goals that I had set out to achieve."²⁵

In an e-book he published called *The Cube Method*, Lilly outlined a program that helped him achieve his original goals, and expressed similar thoughts, albeit more intensely. He wrote:

Watch a Multi-Ply powerlifting meet, you tell me what you see is wrong. You don't see it? I sure do, because I lived it. I hid behind layers of canvas, and polyester material that allowed me to showcase my "talents." What were those talents? Getting fat, and getting weak, getting my gear altered so that I would get more "pop" rather than getting strong enough to move weights.²⁶

Lilly's change involved modeling his training after those who compete in the sport of strongman, which requires competitors to train for strength in a number of disciplines rather than only the squat, bench, and deadlift in order to succeed.²⁷

Jim Wendler, who also trained under Simmons, had a similar experience regarding supportive lifting. In his popular e-book, titled *5/3/1*, he stated that after accomplishing his powerlifting goals, including squatting 1,000 pounds, he was "dissatisfied with how [he] felt," and wanted a change.²⁸ His first priority was losing weight. "I was about 280 pounds, and I wanted to be able to tie my shoes without turning red," Wendler wrote. "I wanted to be able to walk down the street without losing my breath. Like many people, I played football in high



Powerlifter Brandon Lilly began his career by using PEG but soon realized he was neither as fit nor as strong as he had been before he began using PEG. Lilly has used his awareness of the limitations of gear to help market his new training system called The Cube.

school and college. I was in shape then, and could do just about anything. Fast-forward five years, and I was at the bottom of the food chain. That feeling of being a fat-ass was awful. I was exactly what I despised.”²⁹ Wendler summed up his thoughts by writing, “*I was fat and out of shape. And even though I’d recently squatted 1000 pounds, I really wasn’t strong. I couldn’t move, and I couldn’t use this strength for anything other than waddling up to a monolift and squatting.*” [Editors’ Note: *A monolift device allows a lifter to start and finish a squat without walking either backward or forward.*]³⁰

Similar to Lilly, Wendler became disheartened about his physical state. His notion of “being strong” meant more than training solely for the bench, squat, and deadlift. As such, his e-book represents a shift from focusing only on these exercises to becoming a well-rounded athlete with strength that can be transposed to everyday life.

Lilly’s thoughts about gear included more than just the physical effects, however. He stated, “At some point ... I recognized that [geared records are] a unique human achievement, but it’s no longer sport. To me it’s

technology.” This is not to say that those lifters who train in gear do not exert an exceptional amount of effort to reach their goals, however. Similar to Yoxall’s statements, Lilly said, “People that train that way, I respect what they do, because it’s a huge investment.” There remains something amiss with that effort, however, and he argued, “But I think that the gear started out as a safety mechanism ... and then it became, ‘Okay, how far can we take this?’”³¹ These final thoughts indicate that — in the minds of a growing percentage of powerlifters — the past increase in the use of supportive gear changed the sport of powerlifting so much that the weights lifted in many federations are not accurate representations of a person’s functional strength. According to Lilly, he could no longer reconcile performance enhancing gear with his idea of all around, useful strength.

Final Thoughts

Through these varying perspectives, it becomes clear that lifters have conflicting attitudes toward supportive gear that have been influenced by their experiences. Further, it’s easy to see there is no consensus regarding supportive gear. Some lifters embrace it wholeheartedly and assert that it represents human nature in the form of striving for progress. Sport philosopher Andy Miah agrees that this attitude is justified.³² Others strongly resist it, insisting that it alters our natural movements, misrepresents what it means to be strong, introduces new dangers to lifting, and/or confounds records.

Still others appreciate qualities from both sides of the issue. In their chapter “Reflections on the Parallel Federation Solution to the Problem of Drug Use in Sport: The Cautionary Tale of Powerlifting,” Jan and Terry Todd suggested that the current state of powerlifting is best explained by a postmodern framework.³³ In other words, multiple value systems may be represented, and participants can each reap different rewards from their interpretation of the sport. Many of those interviewed indirectly supported this view as their participation in powerlifting — and their use of supportive gear — changed in accordance with their goals.

Some traditionalists may believe that the recent influx of raw divisions — as discussed in this article’s sister piece in this issue — will be the “saving grace” of powerlifting that will bring it back to its roots. However,

there may also be problems with this view. First, the early years of powerlifting were not without participants who pushed the boundaries of legal equipment regulations. The early years were fraught with supportive gear, albeit primitive, used in an effort to set records and lift more weight. Although there were certainly those during that period that did not use gear — just as there are those who do not use it today — powerlifting was never untouched by it.

Second, the authors worry that the raw division will experience what the early days of powerlifting experienced; gear will slowly creep into even these kinds of competitions. Signs of this were evident at the 2013 USAPL Raw National Championships. Author Ben Pollack, who lifted in that contest, learned prior to the meet that Titan was sold out of its XXX-small knee sleeves. One might think this is odd, since a size this small would normally have little demand. However, when knee sleeves are the only allowable wrapping around the knee, and when it is widely known that tight knee sleeves work more or less like tight knee wraps, XXX-small knee sleeves sell out. Even raw lifters will push to the very limits of the rules in order to gain a competitive advantage while still claiming to be “raw.” According to Pollack, during the meet, some competitors needed two handlers to help pull their knee sleeves on because they were so small. In 2014, the USAPL, to their credit, passed a rule prohibiting lifters from receiving this type of assistance. However, that didn’t deter Anderson Powerlifting LLC from selling KLA Knee Sleeve Slip-Ons. These are thin, smooth tubes of material, almost like stockings, that lifters put on before donning knee sleeves. Lifters pull the tube over the knee, and then pull the knee sleeve into the correct position over the slick fabric. Because the material is thin and smooth, the lifter does not need help from others in order to put on sleeves and after the lifter dons the sleeves, the slip-ons are easily pulled out from underneath.³⁴

What does this all mean? Pete Alaniz of Titan-Support Systems suggests that “the actual relationship of gear to the sport is that lifters have changed gear just as gear has changed lifters. Lifters, like all other athletes, are always looking for an ‘edge.’” This relationship goes both ways, he claims. “Gear development has been driven by lifter demand. The various gear companies have all attempted to give the lifter that extra ‘edge’ to gain market share; same as in every other industry,” said Alaniz.³⁵

One notable, relatively recent trend that may be

influencing lifter demand is CrossFit. Started by Greg Glassman and Lauren Jenai in 2000, CrossFit is promoted as an exercise philosophy and a competitive fitness sport that builds power, flexibility and endurance.³⁶ The exercise program consists primarily of high intensity training using many movements from a number of physical culture disciplines such as gymnastics, weightlifting, powerlifting, and Strongman. As a business entity, CrossFit has experienced explosive growth; it boasts approximately twelve thousand gyms worldwide and paid out over two million dollars in prize money at its 2015 CrossFit Games; it also has a partnership with Reebok.³⁷

Although not backed by scholarly research, it seems clear to us that the growth of CrossFit has increased the popularity of sports such as powerlifting and, especially, Olympic weightlifting.³⁸ CrossFit’s emphasis on bodyweight movements, agility, speed, and flexibility, is a polar opposite to what is required in the most extreme forms of equipped powerlifting. As such, CrossFit can be expected to only encourage raw powerlifting, so that any CrossFitters who make the transition to powerlifting, or who compete in both sports, will do so as unequipped, or, at most, only lightly equipped competitors.

This article was not intended to solve the philosophical dilemma the sport of powerlifting currently faces. Instead, our purpose here was to give voice to the varied opinions that powerlifters from many different backgrounds have on the subject. Future researchers may, perhaps, be able to unpack the various factors influencing the ebb and flow of supportive gear in the sport, and other questions that are beyond our focus here. For example, does CrossFit actually have an effect on powerlifting, or is this simply conjecture? Have sociocultural factors influenced attitudes which have led to differences in preferences over the years? Also, have organizations or businesses — other than the ones mentioned earlier in this article — affected the amount or types of gear being used? And finally, if PEG is left unchecked, “how far will it go?”

Ultimately, the most interesting question related to this entire debate is this: what are the limits of gear in this sport? Louie Simmons maintains, “Nothing has changed since powerlifting began. Everyone looks for an edge. That’s simply sport.”³⁹ Our analysis of the opinions of a wide variety of lifters who have moved away from gear, however, reveals that when Simmons uses the

term “everyone,” he is simply mistaken. Many people who lift raw do so to compete on equal terms with other lifters of a similar size who for reasons of safety, ethics, pursuit of functional strength, and the wish to determine which man or which woman can lift the most weight — not which man and his gear or which woman and her gear can lift the most weight.

NOTES

1. Our interviewees consisted primarily of elite level lifters and/or those with reputations in other aspects of the world of strength such as coaching. Additionally, we supplemented interviews with selections from magazines such as *Powerlifting USA* and from interviews and opinions published online.
2. Interview with Kim Beckwith, 25 April 2014.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. For information on ethics and sport technology see Lee Ann Paradise, Eileen Imada, and Peter Andrews, “Have Technological Advances in Sports such as Tennis, Golf, and Track and Field Supplanted the Athletic Achievements of the Participants in Those Sports?” *Science Clarified*, 2014, viewed at: www.scienceclarified.com/dispute/Vol-1/Have-technological-advances-in-sports-such-as-tennis-golf-and-track-and-field-supplanted-the-athletic-achievements-of-the-participants-in-those-sports.html#b; Josh Chan, “A New Breed Of Unfair Advantage In Sports – ‘Technology Doping,’” *Engineering*, 12 July 2012, viewed at: www.engineering.com/3DPrinting/3DPrintingArticles/ArticleID/4519/A-New-Breed-Of-Unfair-Advantage-In-Sports-Technology-Doping.aspx.
5. Interview with Larry Pacifico, 15 April 2014.
6. Interview with Kevin Yoxall, 8 August 2013. Yoxall was head strength and conditioning coach at Auburn University from 1999–2012.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. PR is an acronym for “personal record.” This means a lifter achieved a new best in a particular lift.
9. Interview with Kevin Yoxall.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Interview with Jill Mills, 1 August 2013.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Preston Turner, “Re: Questions,” email to Dominic Morais, 28 April 2014, email in author’s possession. For information on reskilling see Ivo van Hilvoorde, Rein Vos and Guido de Wert, “Flopping, Klapping and Gene Doping: Dichotomies Between ‘Natural’ and ‘Artificial’ in Elite Sport,” *Social Studies of Science* 37, no. 2 (2007): 173–200; Andy Miah, “Rethinking Enhancement in Sport,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1093, no. 1 (2006): 301–320; Heather Sheridan, “Tennis Technologies: De-Skilling and Re-Skilling Players and the Implications for the Game,” *Sport in Society* 9, no. 1 (2006): 32–50.
18. Turner, “Re: Questions.”
19. Ibid.
20. Louie Simmons, “Equipment: Never Looking Back,” *Powerlifting USA*, April 2003: 26.
21. Ibid., 26–27.
22. Ibid., 27.
23. Brandon Lilly, *The Cube* (Bookbaby e-book, by the author, 2012), 5–6; “American Best of the Best Lifter Rankings 2007 to Present,” *Powerlifting Watch*, viewed at: www.powerliftingwatch.com/all-time.
24. Interview with Brandon Lilly, 30 May 2015.
25. Ibid.
26. Lilly, *The Cube*, 8.
27. Ibid., 10–11.
28. Jim Wendler, *5/3/1: The Simplest and Most Effective Training System to Increase Raw Strength* (Lulu Ebooks, by the author, 2009), 6.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Interview with Brandon Lilly.
32. Andy Miah, “From Anti-Doping to a ‘Performance Policy’ Sport Technology, Being Human, and Doing Ethics,” *European Journal of Sport Science* 5, no. 1 (2005): 55.
33. Jan Todd and Terry Todd, “Reflections on the ‘Parallel Federation Solution’ to the Problem of Drug Use in Sport: The Cautionary Tale of Powerlifting,” in *Performance Enhancing Technologies in Sports: Ethical, Conceptual, and Scientific Issues* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 79.
34. “KLA Knee Sleeve Slip Ons,” *AndersonPowerliftingLLC*, 2015, viewed at: <http://www.andersonpowerlifting.com/ProductDetails.aspx?ProductCode=KLA%2DKNEE%2DSLEEVE%2DSLIP%2DONS>.
35. Pete Alaniz Jr., “Re: Regarding the Interview for Our Research Paper,” email to Dominic Morais, 11 May 2014, email in author’s possession.
36. Patrick Sternkopf, “Origins of CrossFit,” *The Box*, accessed 29 August 2014, viewed at: www.theboxmag.com/crossfit-box-101/origins-of-crossfit/; Bloomberg Businessweek, “Company Overview of CrossFit Inc,” viewed at: <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=108717962>; J. C. Herz, *Learning to Breathe Fire: The Rise of CrossFit and the Primal Future of Fitness* (New York: Crown Archetype, 2014).
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38. Kevin Helliker, “The LeBron James of Weightlifting,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 2015, viewed at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-lebron-james-of-weightlifting-1440371008>; Justin Lascek, “Transitioning to Olympic Weightlifting,” *70’s Big*, 24 July 2012, viewed at: <http://70sbig.com/blog/2012/07/transitioning-to-olympic-weightlifting/>; Bob Takano, “The Sport of Weightlifting Versus Weightlifting for Other Sports,” *Breaking Muscle*, viewed at: <http://breakingmuscle.com/olympic-weightlifting/the-sport-of-weightlifting-versus-weightlifting-for-other-sports>.
39. Simmons, “Equipment: Never Looking Back,” 26–27.

A PRELUDE TO BIG TIME FOOTBALL: H.J. LUTCHER STARK AND THE 1910 UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS FOOTBALL SEASON

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The University of Texas at Austin

Editors' Note: We'd like to thank Mr. Walter Riedel of the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutchter Stark Foundation of Orange, Texas, for generously depositing the Stark Football Letters with The H.J. Lutchter Stark Center at the University of Texas at Austin. His gift made this research project possible. Although football is not a frequent topic of conversation in this journal, we include it in this issue because of the insight it provides into the early life of H.J. Lutchter Stark, a serious weight trainer who studied with Alan Calvert, and later became a University of Texas Regent. Stark was known for his love of UT and other good works, which included founding the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutchter Stark Foundation in Orange, Texas. The H.J. Lutchter Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports at the University of Texas is named in his honor.

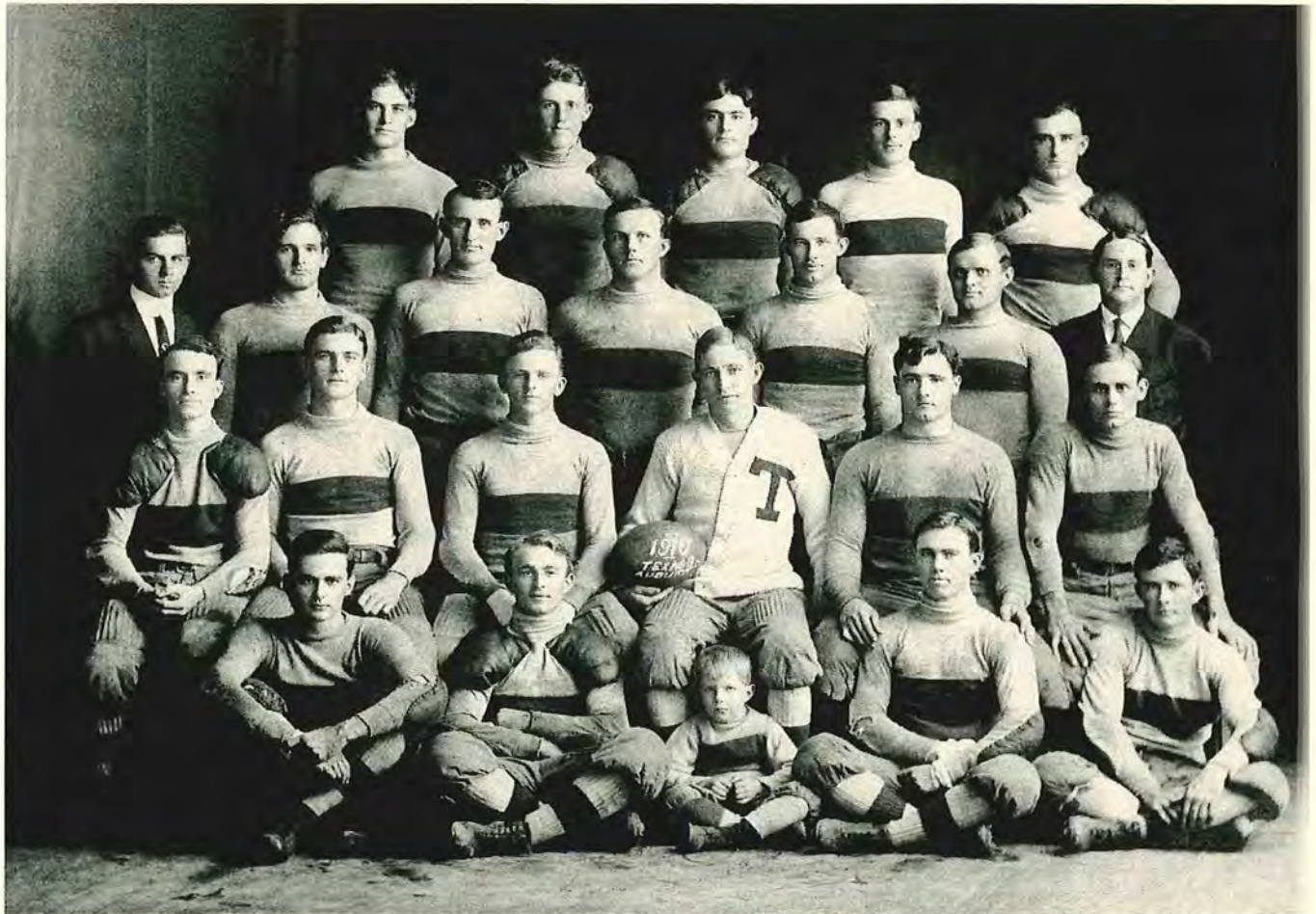
By the turn of the twentieth century, football was a familiar element of campus life at many American colleges and universities. The first collegiate match, between Rutgers and Princeton, took place in 1869, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and the game would largely maintain its northeastern provenance in the years that followed.¹ Dominated in the closing decades of the 1800s by the Ivy League stalwarts responsible for codifying and popularizing the American game, the early 1900s saw the rise of the sport throughout the country, especially in the Midwest and the South.² Twenty-seven seasons of college football would pass before Lafayette College, located in the Ivy League corridor in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, became the first non-Ivy to win a national championship in 1896. Another five years passed before a non-northeastern university won the title, when an 11-0 Michigan squad joined Harvard and

Yale for a share of the 1901 championship. The Ivy League remained dominant for quite some time, but a greater diversity of champions and co-champions in the first decade of the new century confirmed the spread and growth of high quality college football.³

Despite the growth and popularity of the game, college football in this era was a loosely organized affair. Few schools were organized into conferences and the modern athletic department had yet to be conceived. The administrative structure of football and athletics varied from campus to campus, but usually included a standing athletic council, made up of faculty and administrators, coaches who were either hired for short seasons or culled from the faculty, and undergraduate student managers who actually handled most of the day-to-day tasks involved with actually running the team.⁴ Due to these conditions, early college football seasons were not the organized affairs that modern fans have come to expect; colleges might compete against local athletic clubs and high schools in one season, against other colleges in the next season, and not even field a team in the following year.

The University of Texas (UT) introduced football in 1893, with a team under the direction of student-manager Albert Lefevra, also the secretary-treasurer of the joint student-faculty UT Athletic Association, an early predecessor to the University Athletic Department.⁵ The inaugural team posted an undefeated season, winning two games in the fall, and two more in the spring. The university hired its first football coach the following year, when Reginald DeMerritt Wentworth was brought on to lead the team.⁶ Under Wentworth, the team continued its early success, and notably played against eventual rivals Texas A&M for the first time in 1894. At the time, coaches were hired on an annual basis (many stayed in Austin only for the football season), and a number of different men led the team as the program contin-

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In his senior year at the University of Texas, Lutch Stark (on the right, in a suit) served his school by being the manager of the varsity football squad, shown here. In this capacity he scheduled all of the football game for the Longhorns, and even managed to make a profit for the team.

ued to field strong teams through the turn of the twentieth century. It was in these years that the university established itself as a regional football power and began to develop many of its longstanding rivalries, including those with the University of Oklahoma, Baylor University, and Texas Christian University. Other traditions would take root in these years, including the selection of the team colors of orange and white (by the Board of Regents in 1900) and the naming of the team as "The Longhorns" by *The Texan* writer D.A. Frank in 1903, although the team was generally referred to as the "Varsity" through the mid-1910s.⁷

The University of Texas, like most schools, adhered to this organizational model through the first decade of the twentieth century. Significant changes to the system would not come until the second decade of the twentieth century, but a critical figure in the history of this transition would join the squad in the 1909 sea-

son. It was that year that Henry Jacob Lutch Stark, then a junior, became assistant student manager. Stark, who went by Lutch, undertook the role of head manager in 1910, becoming part of a team he would support and influence (in numerous ways) for over half a century. In fact, the continued national influence of University of Texas football in the twenty-first century may justify calling Lutch Stark a critical figure in the history of American football and not just in the history of football at Texas.

Stark had been an ardent fan and supporter of university athletics since his arrival as a freshman in 1905. Known at that time as "the richest boy in Texas," Stark was heir to one of the largest timber and land fortunes in turn-of-the-century America; his family controlled more than 600,000 acres of land stretching from the Sabine River bottoms of east Texas into the lands of western Louisiana.⁸ Lutch was the first undergraduate

student to have a car at the university; brought Sydney Mouton, his African-American valet with him to campus to look after his apartment and clothing; and was by all accounts one of the richest men on any college campus in America at the time.⁹ His campus lifestyle actually garnered media attention, carrying his name from Texas to far-off locales like Placerville, California.¹⁰

Wealthy enough that he would never require employment for his own gain, Lutchter committed to working for the benefit of others at a young age, and did so throughout his life.¹¹ Stark family lore suggests that Lutchter's grandmother, imploring the young man to find a cause worthy of his support, may have spurred on this philanthropic impulse.¹² He found his first calling with the 1910 Texas Longhorn football team, performing a wide array of duties during a campaign that would establish the Texas squad as one of the premier teams in the country. Chief among his responsibilities was the negotiation of a schedule for the fall season, which Lutchter undertook via letter and Western Union telegram in the winter and spring of 1910. Remarkably, Stark saved more than 275 items of correspondence from his year as the manager of the UT football team.¹³ Drawing on this collection of correspondence, archival records of the University Athletic Council, *The Texan* student newspaper, and other sources, this paper traces and examines the role Stark played in the 1910 football season, an experience that influenced his lifelong commitment to the University and its athletic programs. This is a story of a pivotal year in the development of a man and a team that would influence college football in America for decades to come. It is also a story of game that will seem familiar to modern fans, yet at times equally foreign. College football was still relatively unexplored territory in 1910, but it was beginning to resemble the game we now see played on Saturday afternoons across the United States, thanks in large part to the vision and effort of men like Lutchter Stark.

Scheduling

At the University of Texas in 2015, football scheduling is a complex task, requiring negotiation with opposing teams and collaboration between the athletic department, campus facility management, media outlets, and local transit and public safety authorities. Modern schedules must also be crafted years in advance; as of this writing, the 2016 NCAA football season is six months away, but eager University of Texas fans can

already look forward to big dates in 2018 (University of Southern California), 2020 (Louisiana State University), and 2024 (University of Michigan). After assuming managerial duties in late 1909, the job of determining the 1910 schedule and negotiating financial terms with opposing teams fell on the shoulders of young Lutchter Stark. Unlike his modern counterparts, Stark had no previously guaranteed games to work with. Starting almost from scratch, Stark would not finalize the season's schedule until early summer, mere months before the first game.

Stark knew he could count on games against Baylor, Oklahoma, and Texas A&M Universities, as these contests had been regular affairs since the turn of the century, when the University declared that its team could only play other academic institutions following a bloody brawl in a game against the team representing the city of Dallas.¹⁴ Despite these regular opponents, the volume of correspondence between Stark and officials at other colleges beginning in late 1909 and continuing throughout the first half of 1910 indicates that most dates still needed to be filled. For what would eventually be an eight-game season, Lutchter was in contact with at least 35 schools, ranging westward to Colorado (University of Colorado and Colorado College), north to Kansas (University of Kansas and Kansas State University), and as far east as Georgia (University of Georgia and Georgia Tech University).

The primary concerns in assembling a schedule in the twenty-first century are not markedly different than those Lutchter and his equivalents at other universities dealt with in 1910. Then, like today, the logistics of team travel and financial matters were the two most critical issues in negotiating a football schedule. Teams generally traveled by train in the early part of the century, so both the frequency and distance of traveling to away games were limiting factors in scheduling. Consulting the letters in the Stark Collection and historical records for turn-of-the-century teams, it appears that most colleges and universities limited the majority of their away games to in-state opposition, preferring return trips that could be made within twenty-four hours.¹⁵ Those teams that did take on longer road trips (generally those with a remote location or more prestigious teams that could command a high guarantee) tended to limit such travel to one occasion per season, often scheduling multiple opponents near a destination or along their route. On occasion, such travel would lead to a frequency of games

unthinkable by modern standards, like the Sewanee club that played seven matches in nine days.¹⁶ In addition to the limitations of transportation and finances, travel for football was also curbed by university faculty, some of whom were opposed to their students spending significant time away from campus and the classroom.¹⁷

Such faculty influence would stymie Lutchter in his attempt to secure a home date against Tulane, one he felt the Longhorns deserved, for a rematch of a 10-10 tie played the previous season in New Orleans. In an 11 January response to a request from Tulane for Texas to return to the Crescent City in 1910, Stark held firm, "I have not decided definitely on the trip we shall take next year but you can see why it will be impossible to play you in New Orleans on November 12 or 24. In the first place it's your turn to give TEXAS a game on our field. If you care for a game here, I will give you an early date in October with a guarantee of 500.00."¹⁸ James Fortier, the Tulane manager, continued to appeal for a Texas return to New Orleans, explaining in his response that, "Texas and Tulane must get together on the gridiron in 1910 come what may. We cannot come to Austin due to the fact that the faculty will not let us take two trips... Now, let me hope that you are not in as sad a predicament as I and that you can solve the difficulty."¹⁹ Fortier and Stark would continue their correspondence into April, but neither would be able to solve "the difficulty," and it would take another thirteen years before Texas and Tulane met again, in a game played on 13 October 1923, in Beaumont, Texas. The Longhorns beat Tulane decisively, winning with a score of 33-0.²⁰

If a team was able to secure a date to play a game, and had the blessing of their faculty and athletic council (the precursor to the modern athletic department), the final piece of the scheduling puzzle was to settle on financial terms. Auburn manager Thomas Bragg wrote to Stark in a telegram on April 11, "We might be able to arrange game with you October 29, provided you guarantee expenses and other sufficient financial inducement." In most cases, the hosting team offered a guarantee to the visiting side, based on a reimbursement of travel expenses and either a flat rate or a percentage of the gate receipts. On 17 April, Bragg requested \$755 in expenses and \$500 in a guarantee from Texas, which Stark appeared to have "negotiated" down to \$1200 total merely by taking his time to (not) respond to Bragg's initial request.²¹ Bragg followed up with an impatient telegram a week later, naming \$1200

as Auburn's bare minimum price, which Stark appears to have accepted by dispatching contracts to Bragg on 26 April.²²

The \$1200 paid to Auburn was a sizeable sum, but securing the game was a big achievement for Stark, as the Auburn team was already considered among the best in the South. Other guarantees were more modest, both in terms of the expenses that Texas would cover and the cash guarantee. Stark drove a hard bargain on his end, generally rebuking attempts from schools to split the gate with Texas, preferring instead to offer a flat rate. In planning his season opener against Southwestern University of nearby Georgetown (Texas), Lutchter attempted to lowball coach P.H. Arbuckle for a sum less than the Longhorns had paid Southwestern the previous year. When Arbuckle responded unfavorably, Stark upped his offer, but made it clear that the Southwestern team was on the receiving end of his generosity. Stark wrote to Arbuckle: "In 1908, Southwestern played the University for \$90. In 1909, Southwestern played the University for \$134. This game was played under an agreement that I would not care to make, it has never been our policy to pay a large sum for an opening game, but since you people have always stood by us in our fight for clean athletics in the state, I feel that the Athletic Council would not object to my making you a larger guarantee than usual. For a game to be played on Clark Field here in Austin on Oct. 8th, 1910, I make you a guarantee of \$150. Please let me hear from you favorably as soon as possible."²³

In addition to his bargaining acumen, Stark appears to have employed a fair amount of businessman's gamesmanship in his attempts to get other schools to agree to his terms. If he had a specific date to fill, or a dollar amount in mind, Stark tended to use one of two tactics. First, he would play a deliberate waiting game, leaving letters or telegrams unanswered, often prompting a succession of communications from another manager pressing him for a reply.²⁴ Baylor's manager, Earl B. Smyth, expressed a sense of mild desperation common to the letters, following multiple handwritten notes with a telegram, stating, "I have had no reply to offer made you for game in Waco if offer were satisfactory wire at my expense and I will forward contracts otherwise please write at once am anxious to close date as I have another game in prospect for same day."²⁵

A second tactic Lutchter favored was to simply ignore the content of another manager's letter if it was

not to his satisfaction. For example, in the aforementioned correspondence with Tulane's Fortier, Lutchter would continue to send telegrams offering open dates for an Austin game, despite Fortier's repeated statements that Tulane simply could not travel in the 1910 season. Stark's approach was not wholly unsuccessful, particularly against less well-known schools over which Texas had some bargaining power. In a particularly egregious example, Stark went to great lengths to convince John Doty, Jr., the manager of the Transylvania University (of Lexington, Kentucky) football team to bring the team down to Austin for a game on 29 October. Doty successfully lobbied his Athletic Council for such a game and promptly wrote to Stark asking for a guarantee. When Stark responded to Doty's request, he simply wrote, "Can you come on October 22 instead of October 29 for \$500?"²⁶

Stark's dealings with Transylvania suggest something that is confirmed in other letters: that even as early as 1910, college football teams possessed varying levels of what modern sport managers would call "brand equity." Stark understood that his team and his University commanded a certain level of respect that allowed him to push his terms with some opponents, while others (such as Auburn) were dealt with as equals. The respect for Texas is evident in some of the letters from schools that did not end up on the 1910 schedule, especially the smaller schools that were hoping to solicit Texas. Their correspondence tends to refer to the quality of their team for the upcoming season, and that such a team may provide a level of competition that can draw a large crowd.²⁷

Foreign Exhibitions and Other Novelties

The letters also contain references to ideas that were not fully developed by Lutchter at the time: ideas that display his promotional and business sense as team manager, including some that would eventually become common in big time college football, like neutral field games, post season "bowl" games, and outings to foster team bonding. Neutral field games were already a common feature of the college season, bringing together teams in big cities to offset travel costs and increase gate receipts.²⁸ The Longhorns were no strangers to such games, having played Texas A&M in Houston on multiple occasions, in addition to taking games against teams like Sewanee in Dallas and San Antonio. What is notable about the references to neutral field games in the Stark letters is the scope of Lutchter's ambition. In letters to

both Colorado College and the University of Colorado, he proposes a game in El Paso, Texas, a site almost 800 miles from the Colorado schools and nearly 600 miles from Austin.²⁹ For these games (which never took place), Lutchter also pitched his contacts in the El Paso area, hoping to secure a guarantee from the hosting city for both teams, resembling the agreements now common in bowl and other neutral site games.³⁰

Postseason games, now a standard feature of the college football season, were not yet fixtures in 1910. The Rose Bowl Game had been played in 1902, but would not be played again until 1916, and it would be 1930 before other bowl games would arrive.³¹ What postseason games did exist tended to be exhibitions played in the hope of a good payday, and Stark seems to have been exploring the possibility for his squad in 1910. In a letter to Tulane's manager Fortier, Lutchter inquires: "Would you mind telling me what you think of post-season games. What did Havana give you people to come down there? Expenses? What sort of a team did they have, etc.? Ringers? I do not wish to appear to be meddling in your business, but I have been considering a post-season game and wondered if you would mind giving me a few pointers. Would you play Havana again if you could get a game with them?"³² Unfortunately, this thread disappears in the letters after just one more mention, wherein Fortier promises to fill Stark in about a postseason game in Cuba at a later date.³³ The communication with Tulane also indicates that teams were already using significant road trips for group bonding and touristic activities similar to those modern teams participate in during the bowl season. A letter dated 31 May 1910, from E.W. Pearl of the Seabrook (Texas) Fishing and Hunting Club, references a stop the Longhorns made on their 1909 trip to Tulane, and suggests that the players may wish to return again to, "enjoy the fine breeze, a plunge in the salt water, and later [to] "eat me out of house and home." In a related attempt at inducing a Texas trip to New Orleans, Tulane manager Fortier went to great lengths to sell the touristic angle for the Texas players, going so far as to include a promotional pamphlet entitled, "50 Facts about New Orleans."³⁴

Coaching Controversies

In addition to his scheduling duties, Stark was called upon in the early summer to serve as part of a hiring committee for a new football coach to replace Dexter Wright Draper, who had been removed amidst contro-



Lutcher Stark, at the wheel in this photo from his undergraduate years (1905-1910), was the first student to bring a car to the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. Although this photo is not dated, the fact that Lutcher has decorated his car with UT pennants, a big Texas star, and bunting, suggests (but does not prove) that Lutcher and his friends are on their way to either a pep rally or a football game.

versy surrounding his behavior. On 10 June, Edward Christian Henry Bantel, a UT engineering professor and chairman of the University's Athletic Council, sent notice to University president Sidney Edward Mezes of Draper's removal. "The council is not willing to have him return and again as coach," wrote Bantel "This decision was reached after careful consideration of the following circumstances. For about six weeks persistent rumors have been current concerning Dr. Draper's conduct while in Austin last Fall. It was said he had not only been intemperate, but immoral. The attention of the Athletic Council having been called to these rumors, a committee was appointed to investigate the matter."³⁵ The report of the committee that investigated Draper outlined several instances of inappropriate behavior, mostly revolving around Draper's fondness for drinking beer and whiskey, and his attendance at dances in "houses of ill-fame."³⁶ Draper, in New York City for the summer, was informed of his termination in a 9 June letter, which stated, "We regret exceedingly the necessity for this action, but as the representatives of the University in athletic matters, which touch the students so closely and so powerfully, the council feels that it is not justified in retaining you under the facts as found by the committee."³⁷

Stark had served on the committee that brought Draper to Texas and appears to have had a good relationship with the dismissed coach. The collection of letters contains a few dispatches from Draper to Stark, wherein the coach speaks candidly and warmly to his manager. Referring to Lutcher as "My Dear Stark," Draper confided to Stark that he was considering other employment, possibly at Columbia University in New York.³⁸ Despite the apparent options available to him, Draper intended to return, writing to Lutcher that, "I enjoyed the associations there [Texas]." Draper even suggested that he might return from his winter travels

to Austin, writing, "I had considered somewhat the idea of spending the winter at the University, possibly take some courses, engage in some light spring practice, and get better acquainted with the student body."³⁹ As late as 4 April, Draper would write to Stark in a friendly inquiry about the state of the upcoming schedule, evidence that suggests he had little reason to suspect he would be removed from his post in two months time.

The four-member committee to replace Draper included Lutcher; Bantel, the head of the athletic council; university professor and former Longhorns coach Waldemar Eric Metzenthin; and alumni representative James Hart.⁴⁰ The committee made quick work of finding a replacement: on 28 July, the Athletic Council announced the hiring of William S. Wasmund, most recently the star quarterback of the University of Michigan team.⁴¹ The *Galveston Daily News* noted that Wasmund emerged as the selection after "the council had been in negotiation with the best possibilities in the United States for several months."⁴² This appears to be a dose of journalistic license, as the search committee for a new coach was not named (or needed) until the Draper firing in June. What the *Daily News* likely did get right is that the committee intended to secure a highly quali-

fied coach and that a national search was conducted. Wasmund was the first coach Texas would hire from a "Western" college and he was personally recommended to the Athletic Council by his former coach at Michigan, the already legendary Fielding "Hurry Up" Yost.⁴³ The university newspaper, *The Texan*, expressed great excitement and high expectations for the new coach. In a 28 September piece entitled "Coach Wasmund Inspires Confidence," the paper celebrated Wasmund's arrival: "a reputation behind him such would make any man proud... we must predict a season for Texas under Wasmund as has never been heretofore approached."⁴⁴

The Season

With Wasmund in place as head coach, the Longhorns began fall practice on 15 September, eager to improve upon the previous season's disappointing results.⁴⁵ *The Texan* expressed an optimistic outlook, citing Lutch's scheduling as a key asset for a successful season: "What we will accomplish this season will exceed most predictions. We have, thanks to Manager Stark, one of the most excellent schedules that could possibly have been arranged...we have six games at home and no long, fatiguing trips to be made."⁴⁶ The article went on to extoll the virtues of the team and their captain, Kirkpatrick. Throughout the season Stark would receive similar attention in the paper, often sharing column inches with Coach Wasmund for his role with the team. In the 1 October edition of the paper, Stark was commended for his recruiting skills, "He is continually on the outlook for new men, and has succeeded in signing several new recruits, including the Harrel brothers; White, from Bonham; and Vining."⁴⁷ Stark also garnered pre-season attention from *The Statesman*, Austin's major daily newspaper. A *Statesman* article from 3 October described a new university *Athletic Journal*, published under the direction of Stark. The university had printed gameday programs for football since 1893, but the *Athletic Journal*, as described by *The Statesman* was a more ambitious endeavor.⁴⁸ The publication included traditional gameday program information, but also included team history, player and personnel biographies, and a guide to the most current rules governing football.⁴⁹ More than a beefed-up gameday program, the *Athletic Journal* was a precursor to the modern team media guide.

The Longhorns started their eight game season against Southwestern University on Saturday, 8 October.

Every game of the season was preceded by a spirit rally, events heavily promoted by *The Texan* as essential to fostering the support and community spirit necessary to have a successful season. On 5 October, the paper wrote, "Last season, we were more or less criticized by the alumni and those interested in our University for non-support of our team. Students, will we have it said that we, the student body of probably the greatest institution of learning in the South, lack spirit?"⁵⁰ These rallies tended to be well-attended, slightly stuffier precursors to the modern pep rally, featuring speeches from faculty, coaches, team members, and distinguished visitors, in addition to providing an opportunity to teach the students the new cheers devised for the season. Throughout the season, *The Texan* would continue to dutifully promote and report on the rallies, which were the major campus-wide events of the fall.

The 8 October edition of *The Texan* offered a preview of the day's game, suggesting that, "Southwestern is here in mid-season condition: the game will be hard fought."⁵¹ The Longhorns rose to the occasion, defeating Arbuckle's Southwestern team, 11-6. *The Texan*, in an even-handed report on the game, suggested that Southwestern's team was hampered by a lack of speed, despite displaying superior teamwork. For their part, Wasmund's men successfully debuted the innovative, pass-heavy system that the coach had brought with him from Michigan.⁵² Unlike Southwestern, "Texas used very few line plays and played an open game. The forward pass from the shift formation was particularly successful, and Kirkpatrick and Spoons distinguished themselves by their work in this department."⁵³

Having dispatched Southwestern, the Longhorns' next guests at Clark Field were the Haskell Institute Indians, on 15 October. Haskell, then a vocational school for Native Americans under the stewardship of the United States Indian Service, was considered a worthy opponent.⁵⁴ While not as well known or successful as Pop Warner's Pennsylvania Indian team from Carlisle, Haskell had a reputation for competing with top-flight college programs.⁵⁵ The Haskell game was one of the earliest confirmed by Lutch, arranged in February for a guarantee of \$750.⁵⁶ The gameday preview in *The Texan* is notable because the paper was only able to provide speculative information about Haskell. A far cry from the modern era of game film and scouting reports, it was still possible in 1910 for teams to be an "unknown quantity."⁵⁷ *The Texan* reported, "Dire rumors are out to the

effect that they cleaned up a team in Chicago to the tune of 40 to 0. Others have it that they were cleaned up by a score almost as bad by the Kansas City Medics. Neither a confirmation nor a denial of either of these reports can be had.”⁵⁸ Any worries from the Texas side would prove unfounded; by the time the final whistle blew, the “unknown quantity” were crushed by the Longhorns, 68-0, eliciting a reaction of “Say, ain’t this swell?” from manager Stark.⁵⁹ *The Texan* celebrated the team’s record setting performance, but lamented the poor treatment of the Haskell squad by the Longhorn fans, describing how, “When the defeated team went off the field, limping and downcast, some of them almost unable to walk, not a word of consolation was extended to them, not a word to cheer a team that is visiting an institution representing Texas and Texans.”⁶⁰

The following week would bring the team from Transylvania University to Austin for the aforementioned 22 October date that Lutchter essentially forced upon Transylvania manager Doty. The Longhorns—riding high off the Haskell game—were likely looking forward to the 29 October meeting with Auburn. The coverage in *The Texan* was similarly occupied with the Auburn matchup, but noted that Transylvania could pose a threat to a complacent Longhorns side, especially because the team had suffered some injuries in the Haskell matchup.⁶¹ The paper also continued its cheerleading for positive fan support of the team, writing to the student body that, “Manager Stark has gone to no little expense in bringing down this team and it is up to the student body to support him...It is in this game that we are to make preparations for that contest (*the upcoming Auburn game*), that we are to show the team that we are behind, that we want to win.”⁶² Transylvania proved a nominal challenge for Texas; the Longhorns cruised to a 48-0 victory over the physically smaller team from Kentucky, even in the absence of the injured Texas captain, Kirkpatrick.

The following matchup, on Saturday 29 October, was a source of much excitement on the UT campus. Under the headline, “Heavy Auburn Squad Expects A Victory,” *The Texan* dubbed the game, “Undoubtedly the most important game of the 1910 schedule,” suggesting further that, “To win the game will mean more to Texas than a victory over every other team on the schedule.”⁶³ *The Statesman* also stressed the importance of the eagerly awaited matchup, suggesting that “The game this afternoon is expected to be the best to be seen on Clark

Field this year and it is safe to predict a record breaking attendance.”⁶⁴ Lutchter Stark was undoubtedly pleased with the coverage for the game he committed \$1200 to schedule in the early spring.

There was, allegedly, another source of excitement for the campus and the city of Austin that day, also courtesy of Manager Stark. Sharing the front page of *The Texan* with the Auburn headline was a “leaked” report entitled, “Aeroplane Will Fly From Clark Field.” Austin had yet to see an airplane fly and now there would be a flying exhibition prior to the Auburn game. The article suggested that Lutchter – not content to just sit idly and arrange a football schedule, conduct a search for a new coach, and continue to perform duties relating to his family’s businesses – had spent a portion of the summer learning how to fly with Wilbur Wright. The pregame flight had not only been arranged by Stark, it would be performed in his newly delivered plane, a Farnham Monoplane, piloted by Stark himself!⁶⁵ Lutchter was quoted in the article about his proficiency as a pilot, suggesting that while not yet a very accomplished pilot, he “had enough confidence in himself to make at least a few evolutions.”⁶⁶ Unfortunately for those who were excited to see Stark’s flight, it never took place, and records indicate that it is unlikely that a flight was actually planned or that Stark even owned a plane at that time.⁶⁷ The lack of corroborating evidence for what would have been a significant event suggests one of two possibilities: either *The Texan* writers were indulging in some satire at the expense of a popular and vocal campus figure, or Stark himself was responsible for the reportage, in an attempt to boost attendance at the game. If the latter is true, Stark should be credited for this early display of what is now known as “hype.”

That afternoon, playing in front of a 3,000-person crowd at Clark Field, the Longhorns handed Auburn their only loss of the season in a 9-0 shutout. The following edition of *The Texan*, from Wednesday 2 November, proclaimed, “Texans Conquer Alabamians! Wasmund’s Warriors Trample on the Orange and Blue and put in strong claim for the Championship of the South.” The paper described the game as a hard-fought and evenly matched outing, crediting both coaches for their tactics, and celebrating “the class of football” Texas was capable of “putting up.”⁶⁸

The undefeated Longhorns would now take a road trip to take on undefeated Baylor the following week. A special train service was offered for fans wish-

ing to travel north and watch the team play in Waco. The team had travelled by train on Thursday 3 November.⁶⁹ The gameday edition of *The Texan* remained feisty toward the fans, referring to those Texas fans who remained in Austin as “pikers” and “poor unfortunates.”⁷⁰ However, the game *was* deemed important enough that even those fans who remained in Austin had an opportunity to follow the action as it happened: an advertisement in the same edition of *The Texan* invited fans to Clark Field to watch the University of Texas Scrubs play a football game against the Allen Academy, where “Detailed reports will be given from the Texas-Baylor game...A phone will be placed on each field, and full returns given over long-distance. Bring your girl.”⁷¹ Unfortunately for those taking the special train service of the M. K. & T. railways, they would only see one half of a football game. The game, dubbed a “disappointment” by *The Statesman*, turned out to be a rough and scrappy affair; one forfeited to Texas early in the second half by the referee, Blake.⁷² The reason for the forfeit was Baylor’s violation of the rule stating that a team must resume play within two minutes of being ordered to play. According to *The Texan*’s coverage, the referee could have called the Baylor forfeit on multiple occasions, as the Waco squad consistently argued many calls throughout the truncated game.

The Longhorns would have an extra couple days of rest following the fiasco in Waco, with the next game against rival Texas A&M being played on Monday 14 November in Houston. Communication regarding this game is notably sparse in the Stark letters, suggesting that what was traditionally the biggest game of the season was handled directly by the Athletic Council. The only direct piece of correspondence in regard to A&M in the collection is a note from A&M Athletic Association President, E.J. Kyle, to UT’s Professor Bantel. In the note, dated 11 January 1910, Kyle outlined his argument against continuing the tradition of a Thanksgiving Day game

between Texas and A&M in Austin, suggesting instead a neutral site game on Thanksgiving, preferably in Dallas or Houston. Kyle’s suggesting Houston as a novel alternative is strange: in 1908 and 1909 the two teams had met in Houston in early November, before the Austin clash at the end of the month. These games had been part of the Houston No-Tsu-Oh Carnival, which was an annual Mardi Gras-esque celebration.⁷³ At the time of Kyle’s message to Bantel and the Athletic Council, Stark was already in contact with a Dr. Henry Stude representing No-Tsu-Oh, attempting to confirm a date for “the game” in the coming fall.⁷⁴ Stude and Stark communicated a few times between January and February 1910, but the letters indicate that the only issue to resolve was a date for the game. The only other reference to the potential Thanksgiving meeting between Texas and A&M appears in an unsigned letter from the Athletic Council (likely from Bantel) to the University of Oklahoma Athletic Council, with whom Texas was considering an alternative Thanksgiving Day game. The March 1910 letter to Oklahoma describes the difficulties Texas was having arranging a schedule with A&M, in turn requesting the patience of the Oklahomans. Thus, while no arrange-



This is the main room in Lutch Stark’s apartment during his undergraduate days at the University of Texas (1905-1910). It reflects his aesthetic preferences as well as his all-consuming dedication to his school and its traditions. The room is decorated with sports pennants, Mission-style furniture, Navajo rugs, and rifles.

ment was made for a second game between Texas and A&M, it seems that there was a continued effort from both sides to come to terms.

Owing to the open date created by the Monday night game, the weekly spirit rally was moved to Saturday night. The rivalry with A&M was already well established and *The Texan* declared, "Monster Rally Will Be Held Tonight ... All Are Expected ... Surprises Promised." The undefeated Longhorns and their fans were in good spirits, which was reflected in *The Texan's* lighter-than-usual tone in describing the rally: "Remember the date, 7:30. Be there, and bring somebody with you—your landlady or your girl. Get in the big parade to the station and help win the game."⁷⁵ The paper also described rally activities like the singing of "A&M's Death Dirge" (potentially a precursor to the modern "Hex Rally" that precedes modern iterations of the A&M game) and a "one-act farce by the Harris-Toombs stock company." Unfortunately for the Longhorns, the "death dirge" proved ineffective; their high spirits were deflated by a resilient A&M team who handed

them their first loss of the season, 14-8. *The Texan* described the contest as, "A fair, clean, and sportsman-like game," and suggested that, "Varsity's overconfidence is responsible."⁷⁶ The paper's account of the game suggests that the Longhorns were surprised by an impressive, early field goal by A&M's Ward, and had a hard time regaining their competitive spirit.

The negotiations for the Longhorns' next game, against Louisiana State University, offer an insight to the, at times, inconsistent and loosely structured way in which athletics were dealt with in the early part of the



A fit, muscular Lutch Stark in the mid-1920s. A life-long advocate and practitioner of physical culture, Stark studied weight training in Philadelphia in 1913 with legendary authority Alan Calvert and returned to Texas leaner, much stronger, and able to lift grand pianos on his back.

century. In a 10 January letter to LSU student manager J.C. Pugh, Lutch informed Pugh that Texas would not be willing to travel to Baton Rouge for a game, in part because LSU still owed UT money from the previous season's forfeiture of a game. However, Lutch did offer LSU a November game in Austin. Pugh responded on 17 January, noting that the financial matter would be resolved as soon as possible, and lamenting that LSU would not be able to travel to Austin during the 1910 season. Some of the intermediary correspondence is missing, but Lutch appears to have employed his tactic of ignoring a negative response and sending another offer. In the interim, Lutch's contact at LSU would become J.F. Broussard, the faculty manager. In a 26 February telegram, Broussard informed Stark that LSU would accept the offer to play in Austin on 15 October (as per the previous letter).⁷⁷ Stark's February 27 response reverted to a request for a 19 November game, and Broussard mailed out contracts agreeing to such a game on 28 February. For Lutch's trouble (and a \$300 guarantee), the

Longhorns were rewarded with an underperforming LSU squad who finished the season with only one win. The Longhorns bounced back from their defeat in Houston five days prior to handle LSU easily, defeating the Tigers 12-0 on Clark Field. *The Texan* suggested that Wasmund's squad did not give a full effort, but still "out-classed (the) visitors in every department of the game."⁷⁸

The closing game of the season, on Thanksgiving against the University of Oklahoma, took Lutch and the Athletic Council almost six months to secure. The collection contains over 20 pieces of correspon-

dence between the two schools, dating between 11 January and 8 June, 1910. A variety of dates were thrown around in these messages and the tone on both sides was amicable. The underlying issue in securing the date was the lack of resolution of Thanksgiving Day game with A&M. Based on the letters, Oklahoma was the only other school that Texas was seriously considering for the season finale, but the negotiations were made difficult by the A&M situation. The financial terms that the schools finally agreed to also indicate that Texas was keen on bringing Oklahoma in for a game. Early in the negotiations, Lutchter offered his standard rebuke when Oklahoma requested a guarantee of \$1200 expenses plus half of the gate receipts. Eventually, the Athletic Council relented, and Lutchter offered Oklahoma manager Ben G. Owen the option of expenses plus fifty percent of *net* receipts, or a flat guarantee of \$1500, with Owen accepting the latter.

In addition to securing this substantial payday, the Sooners would also earn a victory on their trip to Austin, narrowly defeating the Longhorns 3-0 in the Thanksgiving Day game. *The Texan's* coverage described a warm day, a pleasant atmosphere, and a strong effort from the 'Horns, but conceded that the team was unable to trump their own bad luck. The team narrowly missed on several tries and fell victim to "untimely fumbles."⁷⁹ In the same edition, an editorial described "a season to be proud of" from a team with "nothing to be ashamed of" before praising Coach Wasmund, Captain Kirkpatrick, and Manager Stark for their efforts. About Lutchter, the paper wrote, "Manager Stark has worked hard and untiringly not only in securing a strategic schedule but also in thoroughly equipping the players satisfying their every need. Several of our opponents of this season had to be brought here under heavy guarantees, but he has succeeded in marshaling the best crowds on Clark Field that have ever congregated there."⁸⁰

Postseason and Beyond

The Longhorns wasted little time moving forward with their postseason festivities after the Thanksgiving Day game. On Friday, 25 November, the Athletic Council presented the varsity squad with their letters and inaugurated a new tradition of adding a stripe to the letter for each year served on the team. Lutchter Stark was awarded a letter with one stripe for his managerial service to the team.⁸¹ The following Tuesday, Lutchter's mother, Miriam, threw a lavish banquet for the team at

the prestigious Driskill Hotel. In addition to the squad, coaches, and managers, University President Mezes and other guests were treated to a sumptuous meal on behalf of the Stark family because, according to *The Texan*, "It was Mrs. Stark's desire to express her appreciation of the work of the team while under the management of her son. As is well known, the team has more than creditably played the best schedule ever arranged and is now in a class with the champions of the South."⁸²

The praise that Lutchter received was not limited to the pages of *The Texan*. The Athletic Council's annual report for 1910 also complimented Stark, noting that "The football season was successful financially. Mr. H.J.L Stark, so conducted matters, that in spite of exceptionally heavy guarantees and expenses, there remained a handsome profit at the end of the season, to which he added a personal gift of \$300 to be used exclusively for football, or for the improvement of Clark Field."⁸³ The report, while concerned with the 1910 athletic seasons, combined the financial reports for 1909 and 1910, so it is hard to ascertain exactly how much profit the football squad made under Stark in 1910. It was likely a tidy sum, as the collective football receipts for the combined seasons were \$12,712.83, with expenditures for football at \$10,963.32, resulting in a net profit of \$1,749.51 over the two seasons (Stark had also served as assistant manager in 1909, so he could likely take some credit for the total sum).⁸⁴ The report on football continued by praising the coverage of the team in *The Texan*, which the Athletic Council felt was influential in generating student support and spirit for the team.

The Athletic Council report continued at length, discussing a variety of points related to each of the sports teams, facilities, and related subjects. The report also contained a long section concerning "administration," foreshadowing many of the changes to college athletics that arrived in the coming decades. The section opened with a criticism of the existing system of athletic administration under the supervision of faculty and student managers. According to the Council, college athletics required too much time and energy to expect faculty members to be able to serve adequately as athletic coaches and administrators without compromising their primary teaching duties. Continuing on with the system of student managers, the report noted that, "each year we have a complete new set of inexperienced men who go out of office just when they have finally become qualified to fill the office efficiently. The Council pays for

their training, their lack of business experience and lack of system, for their mistakes and youthful ambitions, directly or indirectly.” However, one gets the feeling that Lutch Stark was an exception to this description.⁸⁵ In their proposal to change the system, the Athletic Council included, verbatim, a nearly two-page letter from Professor Joseph E. Raycroft, of the University of Chicago Division of Physical Culture and Athletics. Raycroft’s letter touched upon a broad range of subjects relating to athletics, but boiled down to one key idea: that athletics and physical education in the colleges must be administered in a serious and organized manner, in concert with the educational mission of the institution, and preferably under the direction of a dedicated professional. In other words, Raycroft was advocating for the creation of an Athletic Director, and in turn an Athletic Department. Following Raycroft’s admonitions, the Council advised the president that, “The University authorities are justified in providing, and it is their duty to provide, a competent specialist to take charge of any University work exerting such a powerful and far-reaching influence. I hope that you will give these suggestions serious consideration and conclude to adopt them or something very similar.”⁸⁶

It would take two years for the University to heed the advice of the council and hire its first Athletic Director, naming L. Theo Bellmont to the position in 1913. Bellmont had previously been the director of the Houston YMCA and was recommended for the position by former football manager and future University Regent, Lutch Stark. Stark and Bellmont had become friends through their shared interest in strength training and physical culture, and Lutch lobbied heavily on behalf of Bellmont, who would hold his position in charge of university athletics for sixteen years. In Bellmont’s prolific tenure as Athletic Director (1913-1929), he oversaw the creation of an intramural sports program; the birth of the Texas Relays track and field competition, under the direction of Coach Clyde Littlefield; the building of Texas Memorial Stadium; the founding of the Southwestern Conference; and the hiring of several legendary coaches in various sports.⁸⁷

Lutch Stark’s service, dedication, and financial support to the university and its athletic programs – rooted in his days as student manager of the football team – continued until his death in 1965. In 1919, at the age of 32, Lutch became a University Regent, the youngest to ever serve in that position. Taking only a two-year break,

from 1931 to 1933, Stark served until 1945. He served as Chairman of the Board of Regents for 12 of those years.⁸⁸ Both his 24 years on the Board and his 12 as Chairman are UT records. Stark remained influential in major hiring decisions well into his tenure as a Regent, culminating in the controversial hire of Dana X. Bible in 1937. Bible, the former coach of the University of Nebraska, demanded a salary of \$15,000 to take over as football coach and Athletic Director, a salary exceeding that of the University president at the time.⁸⁹ The Regents went through with the hiring, but only after the salary of the President was raised by an act of the state legislature. For football historians, the Bible hiring is now considered a turning point toward “big-time” college football.⁹⁰ Lutch’s take on the proceedings was reminiscent of his brash, confident communications as a young football manager, with the *New York Times* noting that “Stark, an advocate of hiring a ‘big time’ coach, said there should be no jealousy on the part of the faculty if the Regents deemed it advisable to pay more for a coach, since the faculty salaries were determined by the Legislature.”⁹¹

Lutch’s contributions to the overall excellence of the University of Texas Athletic Department and its emergence on the national scene as a “Big Time” program are many, varied, and ultimately beyond the scope of this article. However, the survival of the letters and other correspondence from his year of organizing the 1910 season provides football scholars and fans of the University of Texas a unique opportunity to see how differently college athletics operated in these early days. Lutch didn’t take a degree in Sport Management as that academic specialization didn’t exist until the mid-1980s, but in every other way that matters, he was a master of the discipline.

NOTES

1. Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 69.
2. Ibid., 81.
3. John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 33-99. Michigan again in 1902-1904, Minnesota in 1904, Chicago in 1905, and Louisiana State in 1908.
4. Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 85.
5. Bobby Hawthorne, *Longhorn Football: An Illustrated History*

(Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007), 4.

6. *Ibid.*, 5.

7. D.A. Frank, "Great Struggle Comes Friday," *The Texan*, 7 October 1903.

8. David Bell, "Lutcher Family Story Told on Plaques," *Orange Leader*, 4 July 2011.

9. Howard C. Williams, "Stark Henry Jacob Lutcher," *Handbook of Texas Online* Viewed at: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fst16>.

10. "Texas College Boy Has Valet and Three Autos," *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, 28 January 1911.

11. Kenneth Foree, Jr., "Archangel and His Bible," *The Saturday Evening Post* 210, no. 15 (9 October 1937): 19-96.

12. Jan Todd interview with Walter Riedel, CEO of the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutcher Stark Foundation, Orange, Texas, October 2011.

13. The Lutcher Stark Football Letters are housed at the H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical. Culture and Sports at the University of Texas at Austin. Digital copies may be viewed at: www.starkcenter.org/todd-mclean-library/digital-books/.

14. Hawthorne, *Longhorn Football*, 4-9; "Longhorn Legacy: 100 Years of Football Programs," viewed at: www.edb.utexas.edu/resources/longhornlegacy/1900.html. At the turn of the twentieth century a group of football supporters helped the university raise \$3,000 to purchase a tract of land just east of the campus, which was subsequently named Clark Field in honor of George B. Clark, who served as the campus auditor, librarian, registrar, secretary of the faculty, and campus caretaker. The new field made the team more central to the university's identity and allowed students easier access to the games.

15. For information on historical college football team records by season, see: *Jim and Sheri Howell's Homepage*, at www.jhowell.net/cf/scores/byname.htm.

16. Stark to Sewanee University team manager Alvin L. Browne, 14 February 1910.

17. Watterson, *College Football*, 22-25.

18. Stark to Tulane University manager James Fortier, 11 January 1910.

19. Tulane University manager James Fortier to Stark, 15 January 1910.

20. Division I Historical Scores Database, "Texas Historical Scores," viewed at: www.jhowell.net/cf/scores/Texas.htm.

21. A note on the historic value of the dollar: \$1.00 in 1910 would have the purchasing power of \$24.50 in 2012. The \$1200 guarantee to Auburn would roughly be \$29,400.00 in 2015 dollars.

22. Telegrams between Stark and Auburn University manager Thomas Bragg, 17 & 24 April 1910.

23. Stark to Southwestern University football coach P.H. Arbuckle, 29 January 1910.

24. There are certainly other possibilities that may account for the delays in communication on Stark's end. He was a full time student, fraternity member, and a man of many social obligations. It is possible that he was, on occasion, just busy. He also had to report to the

Athletic Council, so there is a chance that he was at times hamstrung while waiting for an official word. Lastly, the collection of letters is incomplete, so some replies may simply be missing. However, taking the collection as a whole, it is hard to read his delays as anything other than deliberate, especially because he seems to have had no trouble firing off responses when the timing was favorable to him.

25. Baylor University manager Earl Smyth to Stark, 10 June 1910.

26. Stark to Transylvania University manager John Doty, 14 March 1910.

27. E.g., letters from Daniel Baker, TCU, Austin College.

28. Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 52. Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 77.

29. Stark to Colorado College manager S.W. Kittleman, 31 December 1909; Stark to University of Colorado manager F.W. Moorhead, 5 January 1910.

30. Stark to "Sir & Friend" Adrian Pool, of El Paso, Texas, 6 January 1910.

31. Watterson, *College Football*, 182.

32. Stark to Tulane University manager James Fortier, January 11, 1910.

33. The game in question was known as the Bacardi Bowl, and was played in Havana on 1 January 1910, with the Havana Athletic Club defeating Tulane 11-0. It was the second such game, following a Christmas day matchup in 1907 where Louisiana State defeated Havana University 56-0. The game would be played five more times between 1912 and 1946, pitting an American squad against a Cuban squad, and was sometimes referred to as the Rhumba or Cigar Bowl.

34. Both the Seabrook letter and pamphlet can be found in the Stark letters collection.

35. Bantel to University of Texas Athletic Council, 10 June 1910, from *University of Texas Presidential Papers Collection*, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.

36. Athletic Council Committee report, 8 June 1910, from *University of Texas Presidential Papers Collection*, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.

37. Athletic Council to Draper, 9 June 1910, from *University of Texas Presidential Papers Collection*, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.

38. Draper would not be employed by Columbia, but would eventually continue his coaching career at Franklin and Marshall College (1911-12) and the College of William and Mary (1913-15).

39. Draper to Stark, 15 January 1910.

40. Bantel to Mezes, 10 June 1910, from *University of Texas Presidential Papers Collection*, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.

41. Wasmund's hiring is particularly notable because it displays the seriousness with which the University was already taking football and because it would be the first of many key hires made with input from Stark, first as student manager, then in the decades to come as a University Regent.

42. "University Gets Wasmund," *Galveston Daily News*, 29 July 1910.

43. "Wasmund's Fall Results in Death," *San Antonio Light*, 5 October 1911.
44. "Coach Wasmund Inspires Confidence," *The Texan*, 28 September 1910.
45. The 1909 Longhorns went 4-3-1 under Draper.
46. "Coach Wasmund Inspires Confidence."
47. "Football Squad Much Improved," *The Texan*, 1 October 1910.
48. "Longhorn Legacy: One Hundred Years of Football Programs."
49. "New Journal of Athletics," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, 3 October 1910.
50. "First Football Rally to Be Held Friday Night," *The Texan*, 5 October 1910.
51. "Longhorns Clash with Methodists," *The Texan*, 8 October 1910.
52. For more on the history of the forward pass, see: Oriard, *Reading Football*, 26-28; Watterson, *College Football*, 106-110.
53. "Longhorns Clash with Methodists."
54. In 1993, Haskell became Haskell Indian Nations University.
55. Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 154.
56. Haskell Institute manager Clyde Blair to Stark, 22 February 1910.
57. "Haskell Indians an Unknown Quantity," *The Texan*, 15 October 1910.
58. Ibid.
59. "Redskins Defeated by Enormous Score," *The Texan*, 19 October 1910.
60. Ibid.
61. "Transylvania Meets Longhorns Today," *The Texan*, 22 October 1910.
62. Ibid.
63. "Heavy Auburn Squad Expects A Victory," *The Texan*, 29 October 1910.
64. "Auburn Team Has Arrived For Contest," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, 29 October 1910.
65. "Aeroplane to Fly from Clark Field," *The Texan*, 29 October 1910.
66. Ibid.
67. Local newspapers in the weeks surrounding the alleged flight make no mention of the attempt, the Wright Brothers' archives do not contain evidence of dealings with Stark. *The Cactus*, the university's yearbook, provides no support, and Stark biographer Ellen Rienstra notes via email that the first record of Stark owning a plane is not until 1928. *The Texan*, despite publishing the "leak," makes no mention of the flight or a plane in subsequent issues of the newspaper. The only other mention of Lutch's flight is in the 25 October 1910 edition of the *San Antonio Light and Gazette*. A short piece entitled "Millionaire Student will be Aviator, Says Report" offers notably less detail than *The Texan* article, and notes that Stark had "refused to confirm that he had bought an aeroplane."
68. "Texans Trample Alabamians," *The Texan*, 2 November 1910.
69. "Loyal Students will Cheer Team at Waco," *The Texan*, 2 November 1910.
70. "Texas Meets Baylor on Carroll Field," *The Texan*, 5 November 1910.
71. Advertisement, *The Texan*, 5 November 1910. The "Scrubs" were the early version of a Junior Varsity squad.
72. "Championship Game A Fight," *The Austin Daily Statesman*, 6 November 1910; "Game is Forfeited to Texas," *The Texan*, 9 November 1910.
73. Marilyn M. Sibley. "NO-TSU-OH," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association. Viewed at: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lnn01>.
74. Letters between Stark and Dr. H.W. Stude of Houston Texas, January and February 1910.
75. "Monster Rally Held Will Be Held Today," *The Texan*, 12 November 1910.
76. "Longhorns Suffer Defeat," *The Texan*, 26 November 1910.
77. Unfortunately, the letter referenced by Broussard is not in the Stark collection.
78. "Tigers Defeated by Longhorns," *The Texan*, 23 November 1910.
79. "Sooners Are Victors," *The Texan*, 26 November 1910.
80. "A Season to Be Proud Of," *The Texan*, 26 November 1910.
81. "Athletic Council Awards Coveted Letters," *The Texan*, 30 November 1910.
82. "Banquet Given Football Men Very Elaborate," *The Texan*, 3 December 1910.
83. Athletics Council Annual Report for 1910, from *University of Texas Presidential Papers Collection*, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas.
84. Ibid.
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86. Ibid.
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89. Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 404; James W. Pohl, "The Bible Decade and the Origin of National Athletic Prominence," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (October 1982): 299-300; Foree, "Archangel and His Bible."
90. Michael Oriard, *Bowled Over: Big-Time College Football from the Sixties to the BCS Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 192.
91. "Coach Bible Confers with Officials at Texas; Faculty Pay Raise Suggested to End Opposition," *New York Times*, 21 January 1937.



DAVID WEBSTER, OBE REMEMBERS LOUIS MARTIN, MBE

Early in January of 2015 one of the most charismatic World Weightlifting Champions in history — Britain's Louis "Louie" Martin — passed away, having in his heyday made a tremendous impact in national and international sport. In addition to Louie's matchless lifting, his special brand of sportsmanship made him an icon and valued role model who will never be forgotten by those who knew him well.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, on 11 November 1936, Louie attracted attention as a youngster, growing up with a small pig as a pet! The most exciting aspect of his life as a young man occurred in 1955, when the Martin family moved to Britain. Many West Indians, in order to live and work in a better economy, immigrated to Britain at that time, and on the Monday after his arrival Louie went to the Labor Exchange in Derby, immediately got a job, and began work two days later.

Before Louie became a weightlifting champion he was a world class bodybuilder. Hailed as "The Ebony Adonis," he competed with distinction in the 1950s when the National Amateur Bodybuilding Association (NABBA) selected him for their major national and international events. What is more, a popular TV program had weekly heats leading up to the final and Louis won this. More important to Louie than the substantial prize,

however, was meeting the competition judge, Reg Park — Mr Universe (amateur) 1951 and Mr Universe (professional) 1965 — his favourite bodybuilder; they had never met before that time.

Louie's very first weightlifting competition was at the 1958 Empire and Commonwealth Games, and even though I and my lifting pals realized his vast poten-

tial he was very raw and unsure of himself. Without an experienced coach he bombed out on the press and was very dejected. The day after this set-back he was still very ashamed at his results, and decided to go back to bodybuilding. Accordingly, he went straight to the gym in the Commonwealth Games competitors' village and began doing bench presses as a symbol of his return to physique competition.

As it happened, I went to the gym that same day with a few Scottish lifters, and when I found Louie there, benching, I spoke to him and asked how he was. At that point, sounding and looking very despondent, he told me that he didn't think he was well suited for weightlifting. I informed my fellow Scotsmen, and we were all so horrified at the thought of losing Louie that we adopted him on the spot. By the time he paraded with us in the closing ceremony we had persuaded him to try again. The rest is history.



Longtime friends Louis Martin and David Webster are among the most famous and accomplished men in British weightlifting. Martin won four world championships in weightlifting, gold medals in three Commonwealth Games, and medaled in both the 1960 and 1964 Olympics. Webster—who helped design Martin's training programs and worked with him as his platform coach—was a pioneer in the analysis of weightlifting films, wrote the first International Weightlifting Federation-approved book about the history of the sport, and conducted clinics for the IWF in many parts of the world. The two men are shown here in Rome during the 1960 Olympic Games.



Captured by the noted British photographer George Kirkley, Louis Martin demonstrates his flexibility and solid technique in the snatch.

He more than justified our faith in him, and with just one year's training he beat the famous Arkady Vorobyev of the Soviet Union and became a world champion! Absolute shock waves went around the iron game world and Louie rapidly became an international star in the sport of weightlifting. It was not just how much weight he lifted; it was how he lifted it, and it was his personality. Off the platform he was amiable and courteous to all. On the platform he would stalk backwards and forwards behind the bar — glaring at it with nostrils flaring and muttering self-hypnotising phrases before slapping his hands together and raising a cloud of chalk. At that point he would pounce on the bar and whether he was ripping it to arms' length like a feather in a snatch or grinding it out every inch of the way during a heavy press, he had the crowd enthralled and totally involved in every lift.

When Louie began his career as a weightlifter Britain had a very solid coaching scheme but had not had great success internationally. However, with experience and good coaching Louie's technique improved and his improvement had a great impact on how Britain's coaches were regarded internationally. This was apparent as our coaches began to receive invitations from all over the world — thanks in large part to the success of our

Louis, who was always quick to credit those who helped him. The great thing was that we were all singing from the same hymn sheet, as the saying goes.

Bill Miller was Louie's club-coach, and he and Louie's other coaches had all been trained by our National Coach, Al Murray. I mention Bill as he was a local man and did a fine job. When he and I were producing daily, as well as long-term, plans with and for Louie, Bill cooperated one hundred percent in supervising his daily workouts month after month between competi-

tions. At that time I often worked as Louie's warm-up and platform handler in some of the major championships — such as the European Championships in Bulgaria and the World Championships in Iran. He won both. In Iran, he was also awarded a gold medal in 1965 for having set a new world record in the clean and jerk with 190.5 kilos (420 pounds), and after the contest he gave the medal to me. Of all the iron game artifacts in my collection, nothing is more precious to me than Louie's medal. Nor was I the only coach honored by Louie. For example, after one competition I noticed that he was scrutinizing his haul of medals very carefully. When I asked what he was doing he said, "I want to give the best one to Bill Miller but not one of them is big enough or good enough!" Please forgive me for mentioning Bill specifically, and for mentioning myself by name. Names are being kept to a minimum in this remembrance, as it is all intended to be about Louis Martin and about the way he treated the many officials, particularly coaches, who helped him on his way to the top. His matchless career and his open heart enhanced the image of weightlifting and, in so doing, brought glory to Britain.

As most readers will know there is a lot more to weightlifting than hoisting big weights. Having the cor-

rect mind-set is essential, and Louie was a great thinker and quite a philosopher. He told me he did not mind training after work four times a week for a year just to have three hours on the championship platform. "But I need to win," he added. He spoke of laying sleepers [*Ed note: heavy floor joists*] while at work and afterward — even though he was exhausted by the work — still doing his full workout as described in his training plan. On one occasion, when a blizzard had paralyzed the road system, he phoned Tony Ford, his training partner at the time, with the message, "I am at the gym and waiting for you." Poor, loyal Tony then got out his motor bike and actually fell twice on his way to the gym in what he later described as the most hazardous journey of his life.

Looking back on championship results of fifty years ago, today's readers can be forgiven for not fully appreciating the magnitude of the records Louie set, but a consideration of the socio-economic conditions for elite athletes at that time will make such an appreciation easier. During the time when he competed, Soviet competitors as well as those from certain other countries had all their competition and training expenses covered. Also, American lifters, for example, were sponsored by the irrepressible Bob Hoffman, but in most other countries outside the Eastern Bloc the majority of weightlifters and officials had to cover all their own expenses in order to take part in the international meets. Britain's competitors considered themselves lucky when they had travel paid by their association, even though they had to pay for their own meals. In spite of the sometimes exorbitant costs of foreign restaurants, Louie always ate very well in quality as well as quantity. He would joke that when he got home he would just do more "overtime" — extra working hours — to cover such expenses.

Although idolized worldwide, Louie kept his feet firmly on the ground. His family was *very* important to him, of course, as were his friends. One example of his character is that he paid his club fees like everybody else.

Because of such a down-to-earth attitude people loved him, just as he loved them. On a personal level our weightlifting club members idolized him. Even children, including my own off-spring, thoroughly enjoyed being around him. Although mine were very young when they first met "Mr. Martin," they still remember him with real affection. This shows the impression he made. Louie enriched the lives of so many of us — young and old, famous and not famous.



Four-time World Weightlifting Champion Louis Martin also tried his hand in bodybuilding, as did such weightlifters as Tommy Kono, Steve Stanko, and Mahmoud Nambjou.

He also positively influenced weightlifting officials in many ways, and here is one example. During a European competition tour in 1969, Austria was the first place we visited. On arrival, keys were given to the lifters, two to a room, as the lifters checked in randomly. Names and rooms were, as always, recorded in case of messages or mail. However, the next day at breakfast we discovered that a few of the lads had changed keys so they could room with their particular mates. Louie suggested that next time we should just put all the keys on the table and let them sort it out themselves and eliminate any possible confusion. Not surprisingly, this plan worked out perfectly and was very popular. As it happened, it turned out that every room had mixed races. We had a South African and several superb West

Indian lifters in those days, but the black/white room sharing had nothing at all to do with races. Two shared because they liked playing cards. Louie shared with Tony Ford — a lifter from the same area — and so it went. It was a sensible and helpful suggestion that was heeded by officials, and as a bonus the result showed how totally integrated British weightlifting had become. (Incidentally, Tony Ford, Louis's training partner and roommate on that occasion, later became a Commonwealth Games medalist for England.) In daily life Martin expected no special treatment because of his celebrity status. In his interactions with his fellow electricians at work and his training mates at the gym, he never faltered in his steady friendship which made his friends in both worlds appreciate the man as much as they did his feats



Although Martin was having trouble completing this clean, he excelled in all three of the Olympic lifts that were used during his competitive career — the press, snatch, and clean & jerk. In 1965, when he won his fourth and final world championship, he set a world record of 190.5 kilograms (420 pounds) in Tehran, Iran.

with the barbells.

When Louis Martin married a local lass, Ann Robinson, in November 1964, it created a stir in some quarters, which quite surprised Louie, who had not thought much about race before then, as he found himself treated equally at work and in major competitions around the world. Because he was so famous in Great Britain at this time, having won the world championships in 1959, 1962, 1963 and 1965, a prominent Derby newspaper declared that his wedding was breaking new ground. In fact, the *London Times* regarded the wedding as so socially significant that they had Princess Margaret's husband, Lord Snowdon, take photographs of Louis and Ann in their home — photos that were then used to launch the newspaper's new Sunday magazine supplement, which was also the first time the *London Times* included color photographs in its publication.

Our hero left many admirable legacies to national and international sport in general and weightlifting in particular. One contribution is especially important and must be mentioned. Those who are students of the sport know that when Louie was in his heyday a great shadow was cast by the increasingly rapid growth of the use of anabolic steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs by lifters. At one World Championships Dr. John Zeigler was much in evidence. Zeigler, a physician who lived in Olney, Maryland, had occasionally served as the team physician for the U.S. lifters and in the late fifties and early sixties he played the leading role in the intro-

duction of anabolic steroids to Bill March and Tony Garcy of the York Barbell Club, and Lou Riecke of the New Orleans Athletic Club. The drugs then spread from those exceptional lifters into competitive weightlifting and other sports in the Americas as well as in Western Europe. In any case, Louie made his views very clear in Zeigler's presence, stating that anyone who used such substances were cheats and should be banned. Louie added that he would willingly take any doping tests in any place and at any time, and he pointed out that he had shown on the platform that championships could be won without the use of banned substances. Those were much simpler times, of course, but what Louie said was, and remains, a very inspiring message.

Louis Martin's extraordinary and ongoing accomplishments were noted in high places, of course, and in 1965 he was deservedly and publicly awarded the MBE [Editors' Note: "*Member of the British Empire*" and "*Order of the British Empire*" are both very high honors not commonly given to athletes and coaches.] by the Queen for his contributions to British Sport. Not surprisingly, when Louie's lifting days were over he wanted to give something back to his beloved sport and to the country that had treated him with such respect. Therefore, he opened a weightlifting gym in Derby for the benefit of young people who could not afford the higher cost of professional fitness and health clubs. There were no joining or attendance fees. He simply put a tin receptacle near the door and members would put in what they could afford. Sometimes more was taken out than was put in! Even so, Louie carried on — for 34 years. Our hero — the lifter behind the statistics, titles, and honors — was a man of conviction and high principles.

Finally, after devoting his money, time, and energy on coaching ambitious young lifters for a third of a century he closed his gym in 2004 in order to take care of his wife Ann, whose health was fading. She died three years later. Another important part of Louie's story is that he dearly loved and was very proud of his two fine sons — Louis, a police officer and Richard, a medical doctor. They both reciprocated that love, and gave Louie great support and company and cared for him when he needed it most.

In the latter part of his life the British Weightlifting Association elected him as their President, and he was very appreciative of this recognition. He was even

more joyful when he was asked to carry the Olympic Flame for the 2012 Games in London. His love of parades and the celebration of the enthusiastic crowds took us right back to that eventful day at the closing of his first major Commonwealth Games at Cardiff in 1958 when he decided that he would stick with his decision to change from being a bodybuilder and become a weightlifter.

I have done my best in this remembrance to focus on Louie's contributions to and impact on national and international sport, but I also want to remind you of the well-rounded character of this great man. For one thing, he had a fine singing voice that reminded most people who heard him of a famous singer during that time — Nat King Cole. However, Louie didn't like to sing publicly as he was fearful of appearing to show off. Also, although not everyone knew it, he had a love of poetry, and his favourite book was the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, which he knew by heart. He had also memorized many of the famous works written by other eminent poets, and he told me that he might have even tried to become a poet although he believed he would have

felt uncomfortable had he succeeded as he didn't want to be seen — as some sportsmen he knew were perceived to be — as quoting poetry as a gimmick to pretend to be an intellectual.

In Louie's declining years, inhalation of asbestos substances that took place during his long career in construction exacted its toll, and in September 2012 he was diagnosed as having mesothelioma. On Friday, 16 January 2015 I received a telephone call informing me that Louis had died that day quietly at home with his family. The funeral was delayed by a post-mortem (autopsy) after which the Derby and South Derbyshire Court pronounced that his death had resulted from an industrial disease.

At 1:45 pm on Monday, February 2, the Saint Lawrence Church in Heanor, Derbyshire, was packed and overflowing for his funeral, even though extra seating had been provided. The great man's friends and admirers, who travelled from far and wide, heard a moving and splendid oration from his oldest son, Dr. Richard Martin. Both Richard and Louis, Jr. who also spoke, agreed that they had lost not just their father; they had lost their best friend. As Omar Khayyam wrote:

*The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.*

Louis Martin was much loved by all of us who knew him. Without a shadow of doubt he was the most successful British weightlifter of all time, and I am doubtful that a future British lifter will match or top his remarkable career. Louis Martin's greatness as a weightlifter was exceeded only by his goodness as a man. May he rest in peace.

Louis Martin's International Lifting Highlights

World Championships and Olympic Games

1959	Gold	Warsaw, Poland
1960 (Olympics)	Bronze	Rome, Italy
1961	Silver	Vienna, Austria
1962	Gold	Budapest, Hungary
1963	Gold	Stockholm, Sweden
1964 (Olympics)	Silver	Tokyo, Japan
1965	Gold	Tehran, Iran

European Championships

1959	Gold	Warsaw, Poland
1961	Silver	Vienna, Austria
1962	Gold	Budapest, Hungary
1963	Gold	Stockholm, Sweden
1965	Gold	Sofia, Bulgaria

Commonwealth Games Results

1962	Gold	Perth, Australia
1966	Gold	Kingstown, Jamaica
1970	Gold	Edinburgh, Scotland

Other Notable Achievements in the Life of Louis Martin

12 Time British Weightlifting Champion
 1961: First British lifter of any weight to total 1,000 lbs.
 1962: World Record total of 480 kilos, Budapest, Hungary.
 (He later made 500 kilos)
 1965: Named Member of the British Empire by the Queen.
 1965: World Record Clean and Jerk of 190.5 kilos, Tehran.
 1969: First British lifter of any weight to total 500 kilos.
 1966: English Flag Bearer at the Commonwealth Games.
 2012: London Olympic Games Torch Bearer

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