First Powerlifting Meet Results

by Bret • April 9, 2013

Yesterday, I competed in my first powerlifting competition and I had a blast! I love powerlifting and intend to stick with it and see if I can build up my total. I can't wait to compete again. I competed in the 100% Raw Powerlifting Federation.

I REALLY love the 100% Raw Federation as they allow for the following competition options:

- Full Power (squat, bench, deadlift)
- Iron Man (curl, bench, deadlift)
- Push-pull (bench and deadlift)
- · Bench only
- Curl only
- Deadlift only
- Full power and curl only
- Crossover (combination of categories)

With such a broad range of options, most lifters can figure out what suits their desires best. I chose the *full power and curl only* so I could also perform the curl (the curl is optional and doesn't factor into your total). The rules for the strict curl are on page 11 of <u>THIS</u> document in case anyone wants to read up on that lift.

In case anyone is curious about the jumps in powerlifting, the bar and clips together weigh 55 pounds. The jumps are 2.5 kgs, which equates to 5.5 pounds. See THIS link which shows kilo to pound conversions for powerlifting. The red plates are 25 kgs or 55 pounds. Smaller jumps can be made if attempting a state, national, or world record.

I went with Diana (my girlfriend) and Rob (my long time friend who I convinced to attend and who I trained over the past two months). Here are our results:

Diana:

squat 225.7lbs, bench 93.5lbs, deadlift 248lbs, total 567.2lbs, curl 55 lbs

Basically, my girlfriend is a badass. After just 6 months of training, she set the Arizona state record for her weight category (weighs 123 pounds, squatted 225.7 pounds).

I'm extremely proud of her as she didn't initially want to do this due to preconceived notions of powerlifting "bulking you up and making you look manly." I convinced her to try it and she stuck with the training and did very well.

She does not do well with the sumo-squat and has very strong quads, so we stuck with a more narrow-stance squat. In training she tends to skimp on depth from time to time and not hit

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parallel. She also has huge issues with knee valgus and we've worked to correct that. These only reared their ugly heads during her max attempt, which can be expected.

She could have curled the 60.5 pounds (she's done it in training) but they screwed up with the scheduling and had her curling and squatting at the same time. Her max curl was around 60 seconds following her max squat, which is insane!

I know she could have hit the 45 kg (99 pound) bench but she felt strong and wanted to go for it. Unfortunately she failed. She's actually gotten 105 pounds in training, but the day of the meet what you do in training doesn't count! Her form really came around – it's still not the best, but it's come a long way in just 6 months.

With the deadlift, she went too wide on her second attempt and couldn't budge the weight. We took in her stance slightly and she smoked it. I was hoping for 120 kgs (264.5 pounds), as she's gotten 255 pounds in training. But overall she did very well and I'm very excited that she has a state record under her belt.

On a side note, several people in the stands commented on her amazing glute development (I have her doing plenty of hip thrusts too), and her singlet was very popular amongst the ladies.

Rob

squat 402.2lbs, bench 319.5lbs, deadlift 523.5lbs, total 1,245.2lbs, curl 137.7lbs

Rob is a long-time friend of mine (known him for 16 years now), and he's naturally a very strong guy. He's been featured in a couple of my Youtube videos over the past several years and we've trained together off and on over the years. I was very eager to get him to compete with me as I had a hunch that he'd like it.

I thought that Rob would beat me in the curl competition as his biceps are much bigger and he was beating me in training. However, for some reason my curls were crazy-strong yesterday.

Rob is a very upright, quad-dominant squatter. I've actually referred to him in the past – as a young trainer I forced him to use a wide stance and flare his toes despite the fact that he always complained that it hurt his hip. Then I stumbled upon Shirley Sahrmann's work where she talked about hip anatomy. Rob does best with a narrow stance and his feet pointed straight ahead. Rob has trouble hitting depth in his squats, but we hammered this in training. I'm very pleased that he nailed depth on all three lifts. I feel that he's capable of 20-30 more pounds but we were worried that he'd skimp on the ROM and miss depth.

Rob's hit a 335 pound bench in training, but this wan't in the cards yesterday. Neither Rob or I were accustomed to pausing for a second with our bench presses, which required us to move down in weight considerably compared to the touch-and-go style.

Rob has some of the worst hamstring flexibility and this limits his deadlift. During the active straight leg test, he could only reach around 35 degrees, which was horrendous. I had him stretch his hamstrings every single day for 10 weeks, and his hamstring flexiblity (straight leg hip flexion) improved by around 30 degrees. He believes that this was the most critical component to his increased deadlift strength. I also worked with his sumo deadlift form tremendously as he tends to want to line up with the bar away from his shins, allow his shins to jut out, let his knees cave, and squat the weight up. By lining up with the bar on his shins, keeping the knees out, and keeping the hips higher, he set an all-time PR in the deadlift and slaughtered his deadlift from 3 months ago by 140 pounds (he was using 385lbs and ended up hitting 525).

Bret

squat 374.7lbs, bench 286.5lbs, deadlift 562lbs, total 1,223.2lbs, curl 143.2lbs

The stars in my mind were definitely Diana and Rob. I was happy with their performance but a bit disappointed with my own, mostly because I didn't want to let my readers down as I predicted heavier weights.

I started off with the strict curl. For those with no experience with the strict curl, I can usually do 8-10 reps "normally" with what I can do once in the strict curl. So if you can barbell curl 115 pounds for 10 reps, this is probably what you can strict curl. The most I'd done in training was 140 pounds, and I failed twice in training with 145 pounds.

My first lift was 132.2 pounds and it felt like cupcakes. Second lift was 137.7 and it too felt extremely light. Third lift was 143.2 pounds and it was very easy too! I checked out the state record and it was 70kgs (154.2lbs). I decided to try for 71kgs (you can go up by 1kg increments for state records, and you can go for a fourth attempt if you're trying to beat a state, national, or world record). I almost got it!!! I was so damn close, but my butt came off the pad by around 1/2 an inch. I actually almost fainted on that last attempt which would have been pretty funny. I can see the headlines: "Big dude faints during curl competition and is rushed to the hospital." I'd have never lived that one down. So I almost got the state record which would have made me very proud. Oh well, there's always next time!

Next up was the squat. My first attempt felt incredibly easy. I like to perform full squats in training, and I don't ever want to be called on depth, so I went deep. My second squat didn't feel that tough – I knew I had room to go heavier – just not 25 pound heavier. On my third attempt I just ran out of gas. Usually I can grind a lift like this out and "good morning" the weight up, but this was just too heavy for me. In the future I'm going to tinker around with sumo-stance squats to just below parallel and see if I can get stronger with this manner of squatting.

My bench press opener was way too light – felt like cupcakes. Second lift was very easy too. But just like the squat – I took too big of a jump and missed my third attempt. My form has improved dramatically in the bench press over the past six months – I've benched like a bodybuilder my whole life and benching like a powerlifter took some getting used to. But I'm finally getting the hang of it and it's feeling more natural to me. I wish I had a better arch – I'm going to keep trying to improve my t-spine extension over time.

Finally – the deadlift. My opener was cupcakes. My second attempt wasn't too challenging and I felt like I had more in me. But I didn't have 600 pounds in me – I took too big of a jump. Barely budged it off the floor. I want my 600 pound deadlift though!!! I'm going to keep plugging away at this. My posterior chain strength (hip thrust, back extension, reverse hyper, and glute-ham raise) was at an all-time high, as was my grip strength. However, my form changed from last year. Last year I rounded a bit more which made it easier off the floor (but made the lockout harder). I wonder if training with more upper-back rounding would improve my strength. I also want to experiment with sumo deads as I may be able to get stronger with this style.

There are many things I learned, including:

- 1. Don't predict anything before-hand just go in hoping for the best. Predictions caused me to use too heavy of loads for all three lifts. Having much lifting experience, I knew that I probably wouldn't get the 402.2lb squat, the 297.5lb bench, or the 600.7lb deadlift. But I probably could have gotten a 385.7lb squat, a 292lb bench, and a 584lb deadlift. This would have equated to a 38.5lb increase on my total, had I listened to my body rather than stuck to my predictions.
- 2. Don't assume you'll hit crazy PR's. There are many lifters who excel on the platform. I'm not that guy. I have tons of anxiety, I'm not a good sleeper, I get jittery, and I perform better under more controlled circumstances. I'm sure that some of this will improve in time as I get more accustomed to powerlifting and I'm not as nervous, but I shouldn't have assumed I'd hit heavier weights just because I was in a competitive environment.
- 3. You really have to be smart about your loads. The openers are critical because you only get 3 lifts (unless going for a state, national, or world record, in which case this federation allows for a fourth attempt). Starting off too light will make you guess for your 3rd attempt and prevent you from really gauging your strength.
- 4. Strength is largely influenced by anthropometry. Body segment lengths, in addition to tendon-insertion points probably account for 50% of one's natural strength advantages over others. Curling and deadlifting come very easy to me, but not for others. Squatting and benching do not, but they come very easy to certain lifters. Long femurs isn't good for squatting. Short arms isn't good for deadlifting but it's good for benching. Etc. Etc. Etc.
- 5. Everyone has a unique form that's inherent to their body. While great form is critical, it's dependent upon the individual. Some stay more upright in the squat, some lean more. Some round their backs more in the deadlift, some stay arched. Some go wide, some go narrow. There are certain rules that apply to everyone, but there are many factors that are dependent on the individual.
- 6. I'm a really good curler. I was surprised to see that I outlifted almost all of the bigger dudes in the curl, many of whom had biceps that dwarfed mine. I must have ideal leverages for curl (shorter radius/ulna combined with long biceps tendon insertion points).
- 7. I really want a 600lb deadlift dammit! Part of the fun of powerlifting is experimenting with your training to see if you can find something that works better for you at that point in time. Some ideas are fruitful while others are dead-ends.

- 8. A good one-year goal for me is to hit the 400/300/600/1,300 squat/bench/deadlift/total. I need to be patient. This was a good first meet as I gained experience and put down some numbers that can be improved upon over time.
- 9. Strength gains for natural lifters requires more patience. If you don't take anabolics and you have over a decade of progressive-resistance training experience (and especially if you have experience with performing squats, bench, and deads with proper powerlifting form), you're not going to see these 200 pound strength increases in one year on particular lifts like you typically see with certain elite powerlifters when they first start out.
- 10. I freakin' love powerlifting, I love the community of brosephs and brosephinas, and I am going to keep competing. One of these decades I might open up a powerlifting gym and have my own team. I think it would be so much fun to go travel around and compete.

Hope I didn't disappoint any of my readers by failing to reach my goals – I'll get this over time, but I need to gain more strength and be patient!

