

# THE STRONGMAN GUIDE

*BY JOSH THIGPEN*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Thigpen is a Pro Strongman who has qualified for Worlds Strongest Man 5x. He has competed in over 60 competitions over the last 15 years with more than 50 of those being pro competitions and has stood on the podium of many international competitions. He is the creator and author of the revolutionary training program [The Cube Method For Strongman](#) & co-author of [The Performance Nutrition Encyclopedia](#) both of which you can get in the [Starting Strongman Store](#).

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For online custom training program and coaching e-mail [jthigpeninc@gmail.com](mailto:jthigpeninc@gmail.com)

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## STRONGMAN HISTORY

There is no better way to begin a complete guide to strongman than with the history and origin of the sport itself. On some level strongman has existed as long as man has existed. Humans have always had to lift rocks and logs, or carry loads of wheat or wood on their back etc. Further down the line in history we had to move ships by rowing with oars on a boat, or pull heavy loads with ropes. Human strength in its rawest most functional form has always been important for our survival. Ancient stories of strongman like Samson in the bible and the Greek myth of Hercules has captivated us for centuries. Perhaps this is why the sport is so appealing to such a mass audience. It is so ingrained in us as a people that we can't help but be drawn to incredible feats of strength. The sport began to take shape to more closely resemble the strongman we know today in places like Iceland, Scotland and the Basque region of Spain. Boys would pass the test of manhood by lifting certain manhood stones with the Inver stone and the McGlashen stones in Scotland. Or the famed original Hussafell stone in Iceland. As the Scottish heavy games became more prominent, events like the Fergus walk (today known as the farmers walk, were implemented alongside all of the throwing events. Around the turn of the century in the 1900's the era of physical culture became prominent as men like Louis Cyr, and Eugene Sandow began traveling around showing their strength and being paid handsomely for it. Weight lifting in general began to become more prominent amongst athletes of many sports. One day in the 70's, Barry Frank of IMG had the idea to create a show that would put the strongest athletes from different sports head to head to find out just who was the World's Strongest Man. Not only was this the first World's Strongest Man competition, it was the birth of the strongman sport itself.

Rather than simply having weights Barry thought it would be much better for TV to have visually impressive feats such as carrying a refrigerator, pressing a keg, and PULLING buses. The show was a hit and was won by American Olympic weightlifter Bruce Wilhelm. This first contest featured powerlifters, NFL players, shot putters, bodybuilders and even the Incredible Hulk himself, Lou Ferrigno. Soon after this first competition other competitions started popping up in Europe, and Worlds Strongest man began to

bring in international athletes. Bill Kazmaier became the dominant force in World's Strongest Man, then Geoff Capes, and Jon Pal Sigmarson after him. Strongman contests that followed the WSM model began to pop up in other places throughout Europe in the 80's and in the mid 90's in America. During this time ESPN began running reruns of old World's strongest man competitions and a huge fan base was built, which lead to an explosion of strongman in the early 2000's that has continued on to this day. Now contests are done all over the world.

Here is a list of World's Strongest Man winners up to the date of the writing of this book-

1977-Bruce Wilhelm

1978-Bruce Wilhelm

1979-Don Reindhoudt

1980-Bill Kazmaier

1981-Bill Kazmaier

1982-Bill Kazmaier

1983-Geoff Capes

1984-Jon Pal Sigmarson

1985-Geoff Capes

1986-Jon Pal Sigmarson

1987-No contest held

1988-Jon Pal Sigmarson

1989-Jaime Reeves

1990-Jon Pal Sigmarson

1991-Magnus Ver Magnusson

1992-Ted Van Der Parre

1993-Gary Taylor  
1994-Magnus Ver Magnusson  
1995-Magnus Ver Magnusson  
1996-Magnus Ver Magnusson  
1997-Jouko Ahola  
1998-Magnus Samuelson  
1999-Jouko Ahola  
2000-Janne Virtanen  
2001-Svend Karlsen  
2002-Mariusz Pudzianowski  
2003-Mariusz Pudzianowski  
2004-Vasyl Virastyuk  
2005-Mariusz Pudzianowski  
2006-Phil Pfister  
2007-Mariusz Pudzianowski  
2008-Mariusz Pudzianowski  
2009-Zydrunas Savickas  
2010-Zydrunas Savickas  
2011-Brian Shaw  
2012-Zydrunas Savickas  
2013-Brian Shaw  
2014-Zydrunas Savickas  
2015-Brian Shaw

## HOW DO I GET STARTED IN STRONGMAN?

The best way to get started in strongman is to find a contest and do it! It is difficult to say what the minimum strength requirements are to get started in strongman. Some people are brutally strong in the gym but are not so great when starting out with the strongman implements. While others are comparatively weak in the gym but are naturally strong at the strongman events themselves. If you really need to know if you have the strength to compete look up the weights for a contest, then find a strongman gym in your area. This can be found at -

<http://startingstrongman.com/resources/find/strongman-gyms/> Go give the events a shot. I will say though, that however that day goes, unless you completely bomb every event should not keep you from competing. The best way to get better is to just show up and do it. You will be glad you did. If you show up and compete poorly just use it as motivation to come back stronger at your next competition. Everyone has to start somewhere, and you would be surprised how many athletes started off with a poor placing in their first competition, yet went on to have great success in the sport. Also remember that there is great comradery in the sport. Most guys at a contest will be cheering you on no matter how well you do, and so will the crowd. The key to strongman is not how well you do, but how much effort that you put out.

If you want to get started in strongman competitively go to -

<https://strongmancorporation.com/> to get signed up and find a contest near you.

Strongman Corporation has been the standard strongman organization in the U.S. for over 15 years. The majority of top pro strongmen in the U.S. began their careers through competing in Strongman Corporation competitions. Strongman Corporation also holds the world amateur strongman championships each year at the Arnold Classic.



## STRONGMAN EVENTS

The list of strongman events gets changed or added to constantly as promoters come up with new ideas for events. Off the top of my head I could list at least 30 events and with all of their different variations you could easily double or triple that amount. Any combination of events can be used in a medley alone. Although there are a wide variety of different events that could be in a contest, there are some trends in strongman that take some of the guess work out. This is what allows us to build a solid core program and still allow for variability in training. So in order to be best prepared for any contest we can break down the likelihood of an event being in a contest mathematically based on the track record of competitions in general. Based on this observation and experience we can say that there are 5 big events in strongman that are the most commonly seen. If you are prepared on these 5 events there is a good chance that you will be good at just about any contest thrown at you. The big 5 are-

-Overhead press

-Deadlift

-Stones

-Yoke

-Farmers walk

Furthermore there are many variations of how to do each event. Body type, muscle weaknesses and strengths, and specific piece of equipment are all variables that can lead to someone doing an event differently than you. I cannot possibly know every single way that every person does each particular event. So I will not attempt such a thing. What I will do is try to give what are the most common and obvious ways to do each event. But remember that what was good for someone else may not work for you. This is ok, the key is to get some basic guidance and have a starting point, then along the way try to tweak each event slightly to perfectly fit you. Ultimately that is what matters. Finding what works for you. The following event tips are a great starting place for anyone.



## DEADLIFTS

Deadlifts are one of the most important events in strongman and are the most important strength overall in strongman. Most events in strongman require that you pick something up off the ground. Because of this, the great majority of strongmen are good deadlifters. In fact strongmen are some of the best deadlifters in the world. In pro strongman a 900 plus deadlift is the norm. But in strongman deadlifting is not limited to one form. There are a number of ways that a deadlift may show up in a competition they are as follows.

- regular bar off the floor for max or reps
- car deadlift both side handle or front
- partial deadlift (often times 18 inches but can be 15 or something else)
- axle deadlift (both with and without straps)

As you can see, you will need to be strong at deadlifts from different heights and grips, etc. A key to progressing on the deadlift is to not train deadlift too heavy too often. Remember that in strongman many of the events are picking things up off the ground and are thus working the same muscles as deadlift itself. You will want to maintain form as much as possible as well. In strongman many most of the time straps are allowed. This is not always the case but it is the majority of the time. The reason for this is that strongman already has many events that test the grip, so the deadlift is turned into a test of strictly back and leg strength by adding straps in. Hitching is also usually allowed in a strongman deadlift. The idea is just lock the weight out anyway you can.

It will not be my endeavor to explain how to do a standard deadlift from the ground with a regular bar, as body type and several other factors will determine how you will do a standard pull. Instead I will go over some technique for some of the deadlifts that are more unique to strongman including car deadlift, a higher pull i.e. 18 inch deadlift, etc.

## CAR DEADLIFT

The car deadlift is done either from the front or with side handles. If it is a side handle there is a very specific technique that will help you lift the car the most efficient way possible. First off a side handle deadlift should not be thought of as a back lift, but rather a leg and hip lift. You should set your feet up slightly forward on the apparatus, and a little wider than your typical stance. Drop your butt down, lift your head up, and have your shoulders up and back. Then attempt to leg press the car up and push the hips forward as hard as you can. For the best example of how to do this watch Travis Ortmayers video St. Patty's day 2006 car deadlift. Everyone else that day bombed the lift getting 0 points. But Travis sets up correctly in the apparatus. He actually sets his legs all the way out on the handles and puts his feet forward. Despite being taller than most other competitors that day he was in a much better position than the other lifters to lift that car. Of course this is not to discount the fact that Travis was also insanely mentally and physically strong. He was one of the strongest side handle deadlifters ever. But when you watch the video it is very easy to see that his technique is superior to the others. Another good athlete to watch was Mariusz. On a side handle he really turned it into a short leg press with a hip pop and kept his upper body upright. It can also be beneficial to lean back into the car further enhancing your leverage. If the car deadlift is such that you are facing the car, much of the same applies, except of course you are leaning forward into the car.

Of course there is a problem with training the car deadlift without a car deadlift set up. One way to train the car deadlift without a car deadlift apparatus is use farmers walk handles or a trap bar. Of course this is not the exact same as you can't really set your feet forward and lean back, but it is better than not training a side handle pull.



This is proper deadlift form on a car deadlift. Shoulders back, head up and legs wide.

## 18 INCH DEADLIFT

Obviously an 18 inch deadlift is a shorter pull and thus some use a slightly different technique. One way that some have felt more strength is by placing the feet out wider than usual. This will make the lift even shorter and can allow you to really fire the hips through. This does not mean that it is the way to pull for everyone so you will need to test it out in training.

## AXLE DEADLIFT

An axle deadlift is pretty much the same as a regular deadlift except you are using a thick bar. If straps are allowed, (which in my opinion defeats the purpose of using an axle for the deadlift) then your strength should be pretty on par with what you can do on a regular bar or maybe slightly less. However, if straps are not allowed, the grip will play a huge role and will limit what you can do on the deadlift. Make sure to go into the contest training the axle pull without straps, and build that grip up in order to get used to the thick bar if straps are not allowed.

### Deadlift Assistance Work:

- Glute-Ham Raises
- 45° Hypers
- Stiff Legged Deadlift
- Reverse Hypers
- Good Mornings
- Shrugs – Barbell or Dumbbell
- Barbell Rows
- Dumbbell Rows
- Chest Supported Rows
- Seated Rows
- Lat Pulldowns
- Pull-ups/Chin-ups
- High Rep Curls with Barbell or Dumbbell as a Prehab exercise.
- Post Delt Raises
- Face Pulls

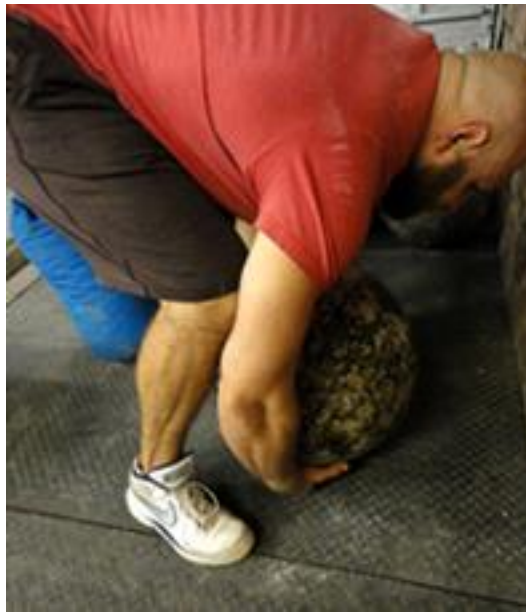
## ATLAS STONES

Atlas stones are perhaps the most loved and classic of all strongman events. Lifting rocks is something that has always been a part of our DNA. Stones have made or broken world's strongest man competitions for many years and winning the stones in any strongman contest is always huge bragging rights. Stones are a great test of overall body strength. Let's break down the technique and training methods of lifting stones-

The first step when picking up a stone is setting up in the right spot to pick it up. Picking up a stone slightly forward or slightly back will cause the stone to roll out of your arms. Having your feet too far back will make you have to lean too far forward throwing off your balance. You want to first center your feet on the stone. To do this place your toes at the mid- point of the stone with your feet just wide enough to have room to place your arms between your legs to grab the stone as shown below.

When you reach down as far under the stone as you can with your hands centered on the stone. There are two ways to position your arms on the stone. One is with a bent arm, the other straight arm. Some feel that the straight arm technique is safer for the biceps, while other feel that they are much stronger with a bent arm. The athlete will have to experiment to see which technique is better for you. You should squeeze the stone as hard as you can with your pecs and arms. Drop the butt down in order to utilize leg strength along with back strength. Rip the stone off the ground. When the stone has cleared the knees roll it up into the lap and up against the stomach and chest. Quickly move your feet in and put your arms at a 10 and 2 o'clock position on the stone. Once you are in this position explode up with the stone out of the lap firing the hips forward. Keep the stone up against your chest as you explode up. A big mistake I often see in stone lifting is for the strongman to stand up with the stone but the stone doesn't move, it stays in the lap. This is because they did not hold the stone tightly against the body on the load portion. The stone should come up with you. Throw the shoulders back and even come up on the toes if you have to to load the stone. Always follow through with a

stone until it is completely on the platform or over the bar. It is always heartbreaking to go through the effort of loading a stone only to see the stone slip off the edge of the platform because you did not stay with the stone. A key point here is that stone lifting should be done explosively. Stone loading is not a slow movement it should be done as quickly and powerfully as possible whilst still being under control. Always attack stones, never let them out think you. The only time you should ever show any respect for a stone is when you are unloading it from a platform, other than that, no respect should be given.



This is the correct starting position. Toes and hands centered on the stone.



These positions are common for beginners, but they are incorrect starting positions. In the first picture, feet are too far back. In the second, feet are too far forward.



Lift and roll the stone into the lap then adjust the arms to a 10 and 2 position.



This is the correct way to load a stone. As you can see, I explode up throwing my hips forward and shoulders back while keeping the stone tight against my body and come up on your toes when necessary.

The other way to load a stone is with a one motion technique. That is to take the stone straight from the ground to the platform or bar without transitioning into the lap. The one motion technique should primarily be used on lighter stones. If you can become efficient at one motioning stones you can really become a lot faster on stone series. One motioning however, does take more out of your back than lapping the stone. So



you need to be very well trained and confident in this technique in order to do it. The starting position is the same for on motioning. The difference is that when you row the stone up, rather than rolling into the lap you pull it high into the chest, keep it there and violently stand up with the stone driving the hips through.



Roll the stone into your chest rather than your lap to do a one-motion lift. Keeping the stone on the chest, stand up without stopping by firing the hips through and throwing the shoulder back.

Tacky is an integral part of stone loading. Stones originally were lifted without tacky in strongman's early days. But grip became a problem with stones. So tacky began to be used on stones in order to make sure that the best stone loader is shown. Tacky should be placed all over the hands, and forearms and even a dab placed on the inner biceps. A little bit of tacky can be placed on the shirt. You will want to either tighten the shirt up by tucking it into a belt, tying the shirt up in a knot on the back, or going shirtless on stones. A loose fitting shirt will cause stones to slip and can really ruin a stone run. The top stone lifters in the world use Elite Tacky. Click on the image below to order yours-

# Elite Tacky

Handmade in small batches by Dave Ostlund



## Four specialized options for exceptional stone lifting

### Elite Tacky – Original

The most popular tacky on the planet for the last decade, it provides unparalleled grip for stone lifting.

This exact blend was used by Brian Shaw when lifting a world record 551lb stone in 2014.

It is best used in temperatures above 70 degrees F.

### Elite Training Blend

Elite training blend was developed for higher volume, slightly lighter stone lifting sessions where quick, easy application and hassle free clean-up are priorities. It also functions well as a cold weather tacky below 50 degrees F.

**UK & Europe:**  
[StrengthShop.co.uk](http://StrengthShop.co.uk)

### Elite Cool Weather

A slightly thinner version of the original, the cool weather blend is best used for stone lifting in temperatures between 50-70 degrees F.

### Elite Hot Weather

This tacky was designed to hold up in the hottest weather when nearly everything else turns to syrup. It is also preferred by many experienced stone lifters in regular weather despite its extra thickness. It is designed for temperatures in the high 80 degree range and above.

**USA Retailers:**  
[JackalsGym.com](http://JackalsGym.com)  
[ShawStrength.com](http://ShawStrength.com)  
[LiftingLarge.com](http://LiftingLarge.com)

Stone sleeves or tape is something that gradually came into strongman through trial and error. Originally strongmen went with bare forearms. Eventually we found out that tacky stays on the arms better with stone sleeves. Especially in hotter climates like Houston. For years lifting stones without sleeves was a matter of pride for my training crew. We reveled in the stone rash and took pride in not needing sleeves. The problem was that when summer rolled around lifting stones without stone sleeves became virtually impossible. Tacky was not sticking and our arms were too slippery from sweat. Once we finally put our pride aside and tried some tape, we found that we could still train stones in the summer. Eventually I switched permanently to using stone sleeves. There are also many people with jobs that don't allow for giant stone rashes on the forearms. The material from stone sleeves (usually leather) also gets a better stick on the stones. Stone sleeves also make for an easier clean up after lifting stones.

4armour stone sleeves are the best in the business. They are made tough with the highest quality craftsmanship and materials. These full-grain leather stone sleeves started off with humble beginnings but are now used by amateur and pro strongmen all over the world. The sleeves use corrosion resistant eyelets and military grade cords, so they will stand the test of time and the toughest stone sessions. Dominate stones in your next competition, get a pair of 4armour stone sleeves. <http://4armourstrong.com/>



The best way to clean tacky off is with-

-WD-40

-Go jo

-Baby oil

Out of these 3 WD-40 is the best option, but the others will work as well. It sometimes takes a lot of scrubbing to get the tacky off but eventually it will eventually come off.

The training method for stones should incorporate both speed training, and heavier sessions. You must become explosive with stone lifting, but must be able to handle heavier stones as well. So make sure to incorporate both into your training program.

The Cube Method for Strongman breaks down a great way to train stones both ways.

Get The Cube Method for Strongman 1 and 2 at

<http://startingstrongman.com/shop/products/cube-method-for-strongman-2-0/>

## YOKE

Yoke is an event that came into strongman in 1993 with the advent of the car walk at World's strongest man. It then morphed into the Yoke we know today in 1996. It is today one of the most frequent events in strongman. We have even seen weights all the way up to 1500 pounds at the Arnold Classic. Compare this to the 650 pounds of the first yoke in 1996 and you can see how far it has come. It is not unimaginable that we will one day see a 2000 pound yoke!

Yoke has one of the largest learning curves of all the strongman events. I have personally seen men who can squat over 800 pounds unable to carry 500 pound yokes on their back. It takes several training sessions on the yoke before an athlete gets used to the instability that the yoke causes. You'll want to find the correct bar height on the yoke before you do anything else. The yoke bar should be low enough that the yoke won't hit the ground when you walk with it, but not so low that it is difficult to pick it up.



Do a couple of practice pickup and walks with an empty yoke in order to determine this. The placement of the bar on the back/shoulders is a matter of comfort and performance. If you are placing the bar high across your shoulders and stability is a problem, try placing the bar a little lower on the back and supporting it with more rear delts. You will get a slight forward lean with the yoke. Hand placement should be centered on the yoke as pictured for a better center of gravity, unless you simply can't reach the bars, then grab the cross bar as if you are doing a squat. The yoke pick up should be explosive. It is best to put a little bit of tension on the yoke, before the whistle or start command. This will give you the fastest pick up possible. Some even start with a split stance so they can more quickly go into their stride as shown below. You should only do this if you are trained with a split stance and extremely confident that the weight will be easy for you to pick up this way. You should take a deep breath and tense the core before you pick up the weight. Keep your chest big and take quick breaths as you go but don't let out your air all the way. Bad breathing is the number one killer of a good yoke run. If you hold your breath during the run and let out a big exhale, you will fold over and lose a lot of tension in the midsection which will throw off your run. You can exhale a little at the start, but you must maintain a big chest and do not fold over. Start by taking small steps at first and then gradually take bigger steps as you pick up speed.



These are the two best starting positions for yoke.



If you have shorter arms or problems with the bar slipping off your back, grabbing the yoke on the crossbar is an option although you and the yoke are less stable this way.

## OVERHEAD PRESS

Overhead pressing is probably in more contests than any other event in strongman. In fact many times a contest will have 2 overhead events. There are many variations to overhead pressing.

- Axle press
- Log Press
- Dumbbell Press
- Stone Press
- Viking press
- Keg press

You must become Proficient at all of these presses to become a good strongman. On overhead day it is possible and preferable to train more than one overhead. For example you can do one set of log press for reps and then switch it up and do a set of axle or dumbbell next. This is especially beneficial if you have an overhead medley, more than one overhead, or you don't know what your overhead will be in your next contest. Not to mention it is good to stay ready at all times for whatever is put in your next contest. In the original program it just called for one set of overhead, but this is one of the things that has changed. If you want to train more than one overhead in training it is best to do whichever overhead is coming up in your contest first, or whichever event you need the most work on first.

## DUMBBELL PRESS

The dumbbell has become a common event in strongman event over the last 10 years or so, but the dumbbell press has been a favorite feat of strength for circus strongmen for over a century. Strongmen like Sandow, Louis Cyr, Doug Hepburn and Paul Anderson were all renowned for pressing heavy dumbbells. Often times the press was a bent press where the man would get the dumbbell to his shoulder and then throw the

dumbbell up whilst throwing his upper body sideways, close to if not perpendicular to the floor. These days the dumbbell press has taken on a different technique Let's break it down.

To pick up the dumbbell grab it with both hands one over the other or fingers interlaced. You can pick it up and swing it between the legs in order to get some momentum for the clean to the shoulder or take it straight up from the ground in one motion. Legs, back and biceps should be engaged and the lift should be explosive. Once you get to the shoulder you will then be allowed to use both hands to get the dumbbell in place. The proper placement is something of personal preference and strength. Some put the dumbbell with one side somewhat behind the head or resting on the shoulder. The more rare technique is to hold the dumbbell in a neutral position on the shoulder with the palm facing in similar to the way it is held when pressing a log. A notable athlete who has had success with this technique is Misha Koklaev. Which ever technique you chose you will need to get it settled and let go with the non pressing hand. Pick a good spot to focus on and keep your upper body solid. For balance it is good to place the other arm out to your side. From there you will want to do a quick explosive bend and then jump with the legs. It is important to not let the dumbbell dip down as you bend the legs. The upper body and elbow should remain solid. As you explosively drive up, you should ram the dumbbell up with your shoulder in a shrugging motion. The important thing to remember is that the dumbbell press is not really a press but a throw and catch. As you jump with the dumbbell and drive the shoulder up you should then move your feet out and catch the dumbbell at the top. Wait for the down command and then repeat.

## THE LOG LIFT

The log lift has been a classic strongman event since the days of Kaz in the early 80's. In strongman it has become the defining test of upper body strength and pressing power. Visually everyone can relate to how heavy a log is. Early wooden logs became replaced with metal logs as strongman evolved. Wooden logs were usually easier to break and it was much more difficult to balance a wooden log. So although wooden logs remain visually more impressive metal logs are longer lasting and better for training.



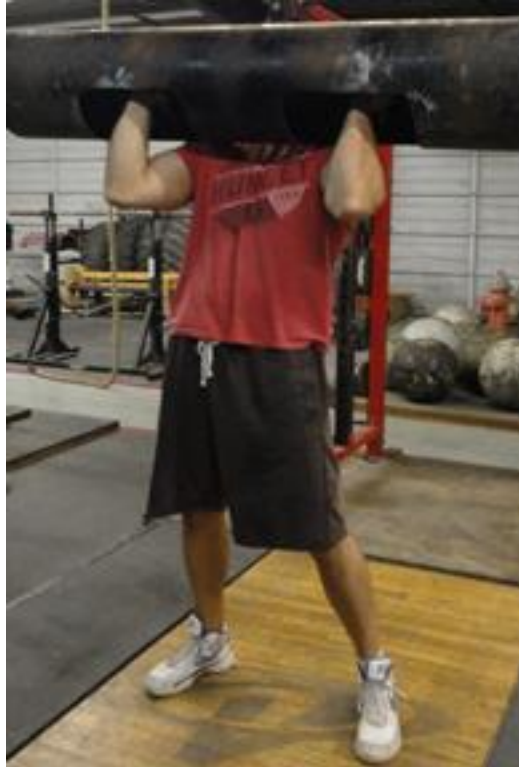
To lift a log you should grab the handles in the middle and row the log up to your waste and then sit down with the log you will then explode up from the lap driving the hips through and rolling the log up the chest. Bring the log with you as you explode up. A common mistake on cleaning the log is that just as on the stones, the athlete will stand up, but the log stays in the same spot on the lap. Keep the log against the chest and power curl it up. Some people will actually flare the elbows and forearms out against the sides of the logs so that the log will come up easier. Once the log is on the chest you should bring the elbows up and keep them there. With a log if you bring the elbows down when you try to press the log will roll down as well. This will throw off your press. Keep the elbows up. On a log you are forced to lean back in order to get the log in the proper position. Logs are typically anywhere from 8-12 inches in diameter but that can vary slightly from time to time. Because of the lean you will not be able to get as much leg drive as you would with a bar. This and the neutral handles is what tends to make a log press more difficult than a bar for most. It is not uncommon to be able to press 20-40 pounds more on a bar than with a log. It is imperative that you get actual training with a log in order to be able to be prepared to press one in competition. You can either press, push press, push jerk, or split jerk a log. The most common of these is the push press on a log. There have been a few who have successfully utilized the split jerk on max attempts or heavy clean and press for reps. But jerking a log takes a lot of proper technique and takes more time off the clock. In a clean and press for reps time is of the essence. A push press is much faster. The strongest log pressers of all time have done a push press or even close to a strict press.

There is another way to clean and press a log and it is the one motion technique. The one motion technique became famous by Derek Poundstone and even became known as viperling a log or viper pressing. Derek made it famous by blasting through the log clean and press world record. It was a technique done in the past by others as well. Kaz, Hugo Girard, and Magnus Ver Magnusson had all used the technique with success, but Derek definitely took it to another level. Let's break down the one motion technique now.

Everything is the same up to getting the log into the lap. The difference is once you explode up from the lap you never stop on the shoulders you just continue pressing the log up. In order to do this properly you must really explode out of the lap and you must have very strong biceps and triceps. The best way to do this is to power curl the log up so high that your press is actually just a partial press. This is why both bicep and tricep strength are so important to one motion. Of course you can bring it to the chest and press it from there using the momentum of the clean and this would still be considered one motioning. But it is a longer press and will take more out of you. It should be said that one motioning a log is best utilized on light to medium weight log clean and press. As weights get closer to your max it gets more and more difficult to one motion. Furthermore, this is not something you want to do in competition if you have not trained it before. Take some time getting proficient at it in training and you should see good results in competition.



This is the correct position once you row the log into the lap. To clean the log to the shoulders, explode the hips through and keep the log tight on your chest while throwing the shoulders back.



This is where the clean is finished on the shoulders. From here, keep the elbows in the same position if you dip down with the legs and then press the weight overhead.

## VIKING PRESS

The Viking press is a press that is set up with weights or some other object on a lever. The apparatus will have handles at the end that can be either neutral or regular grip. One of the keys to a good Viking press is to get a slight lean into the apparatus in order to increase your mechanical advantage. Most of the time a Viking press is a push press only meaning that a double dip of the knees is not allowed. Because of this it is imperative that you train push press in training in order to prepare for this. If you don't have a Viking press attachment in training you can use a regular bar or a log or dumbbells for a grip that is palms facing each other. There is a way to train the Viking press in training without owning an apparatus. The way to do this is to set up a couple of bars in a squat rack. You attach one end of the bars on the squat rack safety pins using two 10 pound plates. Then on the other end you will add weight and press the

bars from this end. A Viking press can be either facing the apparatus or facing away so if you are not sure which it will be in your competition it is best to train them both.

## ROCK PRESS

Rock press is one of the most difficult presses to master in strongman. This is because unlike most other pressing events the rocks can be any shape or size and can have any grip. Often times these rocks will have jagged edges or may be completely smooth making it difficult to get a good grip. The key with a rock press is to first try to find the best grip and bring it in the lap in a way that once it is shouldered, the grip is in the right position. Once the rock is on the chest, often the best approach is to strict press. Especially if you are leaning back way back you can utilize the upper chest as well. If you cannot strict press the rock, make sure and be careful not to dip your elbows and lose your grip on the stone or make the stone wobble as you dip to initiate leg drive.

## KEG PRESS

Before you can press a keg you must have a keg. You can find kegs on Craig's List or you can ask a local bar or brewery if they have any empty kegs to spare. A ½ barrel 15.5 gallon keg is preferred because this is what is normally used in competition. For reference, a keg filled with water is around 150 pounds and a keg filled with sand is usually 240 to 260 pounds. A keg filled with concrete weighs 300 to 330 pounds. The correct way to press a keg is to grab it with a staggered grip and bring the keg into your lap just as you would for a keg carry. You then sit down and from there explode up from the lap power curling the keg up in on motion to overhead. In order to do this properly, you must throw the shoulders back and really explode up. This is similar to a muscle snatch.



Grab the keg with a staggered grip and row it into the lap.



Explode up as you roll the keg up your chest and go straight into a press without stopping on the shoulders.



## AXLE CLEAN AND PRESS

There are a couple of ways to get the axle from the ground to the shoulders. The first is to power clean the axle. You simply grab the axle and in one motion explode up to the shoulders. This route is best if the weight is light to medium weight and done for reps or as a part of a medley. Because of the difficulty of grabbing the thick bar double overhand for a power clean some will grab the axle one hand over one hand under and quickly switch the underhand to a press position just before the bar gets to the shoulders. This route takes lots of practice and can be dangerous for the wrist and hand if you miss the catching of the axle. Never the less some have had success with such a method. The other option is to continental clean the axle. With this method you clean the axle to the stomach or lower chest and then flip the axle up to the shoulders.

With the continental you could also use either a neutral grip or double overhand. Which one you use depends on how heavy the axle is and how strong your grip is. If you use a neutral grip up to the rack position, you will need to switch the underhand back to an overhand position before going up to the shoulders. To properly rack the axle on the stomach you will need to be leaning back in order to create a shelf. To flip the axle up to the shoulders you will need to re-bend the knees and explode up just like you would a power clean from this position. The press from there will be up to you, you can res it the same way you would a normal bar, using either a push press or a push jerk.



Begin with either a double over hand or a neutral grip to begin the axle clean.



For a continental clean, bring the axle up to your stomach. If you began with a neutral grip, you'll have to flip the under hand over.



From the stomach, flip the bar up to the shoulders and then press overhead.

## FARMERS WALK

The first obvious step to farmers walk is to chalk the hands. You then want to set up in between the implements with a roughly shoulder width foot stance. If you have the farmers implements too wide, it will be a longer pick up and the implements will slam into your legs. On your pick up you want to look up and have the chest up and hips forward. Get a really good grip on the implements. Some prefer to cock the wrist underneath the handles a bit to get a little more hand surface on the implements. You should tighten the lats and abs on the farmers and then rip the implements off the ground. A tip to picking up farmers implements if they are too heavy for you is to grab the implements off centered. By doing so one side of the implement will come up off the ground before the other so you will only be lifting part of the weight at first. The full weight of the implements won't be lifted until you have the other part a few inches off the ground, thus making the pick-up easier. This will not give you an ideal grip on the implements but if it is your only option for picking them up, then it's what you have to do.

When you walk you want to begin with short steps and as you pick up speed you can gradually lengthen your stride. Try to keep your steps narrow and not wide. If you take side steps the implements will bang into your legs and this will cause you to stumble and can be difficult to recover from. Try to push out with the lat's and tense your shoulders and traps so as to keep the implements from hitting your legs as you walk as well. The name of the game is to move as quickly as possible with the feet whilst keeping the upper body still. You want to cover as much distance as possible, as quickly as you can. Many people, when they first start out on the farmer's walk, take the word walk literally. The truth is it should be thought of as a farmers run. Always remember that the event is either timed or for distance, and either way it's better to move as quickly as possible while staying in control.

If the farmers walk has a turn, the proper way to approach the turn is to begin to round off before you get to the turn. It is much easier to do this than to go down in a straight line and stop on a dime. As you turn the centrifugal force will try to make the implements turn with you, this will cause one of the implements to be out in front of your legs severely slowing you down if not stopping you all together. To fight this begin turning



your wrists in the opposite direction of the turn just as you are making the turn. Really fight them from turning early on and you can avoid them spinning around too much. You should then use the momentum coming out of the turn to really get some speed going with the implements.



This is the correct starting position for the farmers walk.



If the farmers are too heavy, you can grab it on the back of the handles in order to pick up one side first followed by the other. This makes picking it up easier.



In the first picture, I am showing how to approach a turn properly by rounding off the turn at an angle. In the second picture, I am exaggerating how to turn the wrists in the opposite direction of a turn.

## POWER STAIRS

Power stairs came into strongman at the 1996 world's strongest man competition. It was on this event that Magnus Ver Magnusson sealed his 4<sup>th</sup> and final world's strongest man victory. Ever since then power stairs have been a staple in many strongman competitions. Being tall is certainly an advantage when doing power stairs as the implement can more easily clear the legs. Nevertheless there are several things that can be done for a shorter athlete as well in order to maximize your ability at power stairs. When doing the power stairs if you are taller it is possible to start standing over the implement rather than in front, if there is plenty of room between the legs. This will allow for more of a swing up on the stairs. If you are shorter it is best to start with the implement more in front of you where you will then pop the weight up using the front of your thighs and hip drive. Using the front of the legs to pop off the legs can also be used

by the taller athlete. It is also necessary to have strong arms and traps in order to properly power row the implement up. Many times power stairs are 10-15 steps, being well conditioned for this many steps is imperative. Of course the best way to train is to have the implements and stairs made. But if you don't have that ability you can use a loading pin and add plates in order to simulate the implement. To load you can either find some sturdy stairs, or load onto a tire, or box or anything you can find that will handle the weight.

#### DRAGGING EVENTS (sled, chain or tire)

There are few things in strongman as painful and gut busting as a drag, especially when it is at the end of a difficult medley. The name of the game here is pain. When you drag anything heavy there will be a massive lactic acid pump in the legs. But you mustn't give up. The first mistake I see when people drag something is to do the drag with arms straight out in front of them fully extended. The first thing you should do is to pull the handle or implement into your stomach and keep it there. This will put you at a much better mechanical advantage. This needs to be an aggressive pull. Do not casually start off the drag, remember that the implement is a dead weight when you begin so in order to get it going you have to really attack it. Do one big drive with the legs then really start moving your feet. You should get a lean back and keep your feet out in front of you in order to really pull your weight against the implement. If you are dragging a chain you won't be able to get quite the lean back and your legs will need to be slightly wider than on the sled in order to clear the chain. Your footsteps should be short and quick. No matter what you do, do not under any circumstance look back at the finish line. This will throw off both your drag and your mind. If all else fails in the pull, you may have to do one big pull at a time until you finish. If that is the case do what it takes until you finish.

## HARNESS AND ROPE TRUCK PULL

The first step in doing well at truck pull is getting the proper truck pull shoes. Without these it will be difficult to get a good grip on the surface and will cause you to slip all over the place. Without the right shoes you will not be able to apply the necessary force to pull the truck. You will need a truck pull harness in order to really train truck pull get them here- It is important that the harness strap is not around the upper stomach or lower chest. This would make it very difficult to breathe and you'll need all the oxygen you can get on the truck pull. If the truck pull is rope assisted you will want to pull the guide rope as tightly as possible getting all of the slack out. You will then lean into the harness and continue to keep tension on the rope. Once you are leaning against the harness place your feet back behind you parallel to each other. The best spacing is a narrow stance rather than shoulder width. The knees should then be bent like you are about to jump. Your hands should be out in front of you ready to pull on the rope, and your upper body should be low to the ground. When the whistle blows you want to simultaneously pull the rope in, drive your hips to the ground and drive forward with the knees. The best policy is to not take a step forward until you have gotten the truck moving. Once you do get it moving stay low and take short choppy steps with the feet. Do not take large steps and do not stand up. The hand motion with the rope should be short and quick. Never under any circumstances look up. At all times you should be keeping your head down look directly at the ground. Looking up does nothing to help you and will almost always throw off your truck pull form. Keep your head down, your body low to the ground and maintain short quick movements with your hands and feet. Eventually you will finish and all of the pain will be over.

Much of the same applies if you do not have a rope assist. The only difference is you will need to stay even lower. In fact it is best to keep your hands or fingers on the ground, this will force you to stay low. As previously stated, do not come up. Stay low.

There is a fantastic way to train the truck pull without actually having a driver. It is the product Exergen. This is a genius way to do both arm over arm pull and rope and harness. You set the equipment up on anything that is anchored down and then you can train without any help other than somebody shucking the rope for you. No truck needed,

no driver needed. This is something I really wish I had throughout my career as I would have been able to train truck pull much more frequently. You can get the Exergenie here - <http://store.oddehaugen.com/?Click=323> use discount code strongman10 to get 10% off the Exergenie!



Although I could be lower here, this is how to start on a truck pull with feet parallel to each other and knees bent. Drive with the legs and hips forward and pull with the arms as hard as possible.



## TIRE FLIP

It has been said and I would have to agree that the tire flip is the best total body exercise there is. Almost every muscle group in the body is used. Which is why a tough tire flip can leave you completely gasping for air. There is a tremendous oxygen requirement from the entire body. It is also one of those really cool events visually. It helps to really give a real world perspective on the weight and difficulty of the event itself as most people can relate to how heavy a tire is. The tire flip when done properly is a very explosive movement as well. Many tires have different grips on them. Before the contest it is good to check the grip and perhaps do a couple of pick-ups if you have never used that kind of tire. You can either grab a tire with a narrow or wide grip. This is partly dependent upon where you feel the strongest and by where you feel the best grip on the tire. When you do have your grip set you want to put your feet a little back behind you and not directly underneath you. This way you can drive directly into the tire and not straight up. You should drive your chest into the tire as well. The tire flip should be done in an explosive manner similar to a power clean. You should really explode up as violently as possible. There are two ways to transition from the initial pickup of the tire. That is to drive the knee into the tire and simultaneously switch your hands to a pushing position. Or to throw and catch the tire in the pushing position without driving the knee. Both have been incorporated successfully by strongman. You must find which one works the best for you. Upon moving the hands into the push position you should push the tire forward as powerfully as possible. This will help shave off time by getting the tire over faster. It will also help the tire bounce a little and move forward more quickly. If the event has a distance this could really help cut back on time. The key to fast tire flips is to get down on the tire and regrip as the tire is being pushed down and not after. In other words you should really attack the tire and if you do this properly you can even catch it on the bounce and use the momentum of the tire to do the next flip. To find a tire, look up tire shops which carry earth-moving tractor tires in your area. Usually these places are more than happy to give away the old tires for free.



## SAND BAG CARRY

Unless a sandbag is very long, the proper way to pick up a sand bag, is on each end and carry it horizontally. If the sandbag you are using has a tie on the end of it you can grab one end by the tie and one end underneath the other side. If not, you can grab the sandbag on the tie place each hand underneath each side. The reason for grabbing and carrying it this way is that it will be higher up which will be easier to load and carry as your legs will be freed up to run. When you pick up the sandbag if it is heavy you will go to the lap first and then re-grip with the palms in a 10 and 2 position when you go to stand up squeeze the sandbag against your chest. Just as with lifting stones do not let the sandbag stay in your lap as you try to stand up. If the sandbag is lighter you don't want to go to the lap. You should pick it up and throw and catch it in the right position on your chest. If you are really proficient at this you will even throw the sandbag up and be taking your first step or two as you catch it. Both of these take some practice. As with just about everything in strongman you want to the best of your ability, move as quickly as possible. You can also shoulder a sandbag where you grab the bag in the middle and toss it up to the shoulder and carry it.



Here are the two best ways to pick up a sand bag. First picture is with both hands under the sand bag. Second picture is with one hand grabbing it by the tie.



Row sand bag up into your lap and place hands at 10 and 2 making sure to keep the sand bag against your body as you stand up. Then walk or run as quickly as possible.

## KEG CARRY

There are a couple of ways to pick up a keg. The first way is to pick it up with a staggered grip. With this method you will grab the keg by the handle with your top hand and the bottom of the other side of the keg with the other hand. If it is a heavy keg you will lap the keg and then then come up out of the lap and bring the keg up to your chest with you. The main problem with this technique is that the keg will bang into your legs especially if it is a heavy keg. This can make it very difficult to walk with. You will also have to lean back a little further this way as the keg will be lower and this will really wreak havoc on the hamstrings.



The other method is to grab the keg with both hands underneath the keg as you carry it up higher on your chest. With this method you will grab the keg with a staggered grip but then once you pick it up you will transition the hand on that picks up the bottom of the keg to the other side. This method takes a lot less out of the hamstrings and you won't have to lean back nearly as much. But if you are not trained in doing it this way it can take a little longer to pick up and getting moving than with the opposite side grip.

The final method is to pick up the keg onto the shoulder and carry it that way. This can be done by grabbing the keg on the bottom and hoisting it up onto the shoulder or grabbing the way that you typically would and throwing the keg up to the shoulder while spinning one side around to catch the keg in the proper position. Shouldering the keg is the fastest way to run with a keg, but may be the most difficult way to pick it up and take the most amount of time. Of course while you are running with the keg you must stay controlled during your run. And hold the keg on the shoulder so as to not let it slip off.



To start a keg carry, pickup is the same as a keg press with a staggered grip instead of having both hands on same side of the keg.



Here are two different grips to carry the keg. The first picture shows a staggered grip which is usually better for lighter kegs because the keg sits lower and bangs into your legs. The second picture demonstrates both hands on the same side which is better for heavier kegs because it frees up the legs. As you can see, if you are going to grab the keg with both hands on the same side you need to have your hands a little low on the keg or the keg can roll and you may drop it.

## HUSSAFELL STONE

The hussafell stone is a legendary event named after the original stone in Iceland. The legend was that the farmer's daughter picked up and carried the 418 pound stone further than anyone and set the record for the distance. Before doing a hussafell stone it is best to chalk up the hands, forearms and chest. Some even feel that they get a better grip wearing some sort of sleeve on the forearms. Care must be taken however, if wearing sleeves that the sleeves are tight enough to not slip off during the carrying of the stone. There are a few ways to carry a hussafell stone, dependent upon a few factors. These factors include the dimensions of the stone, and how long your arms are. The first thing to do is get a pick up grip. If the stone is off the ground it is usually best to pick the stone up in a hammer curl type grip and bring the stone up into the lap. If the stone is raised on a platform, you may be able to wrap your hands around the stone and get a grip that you will use for the entire run. If you pick it up off the ground to the lap, you may also then be able to wrap your hands around the stone as well if you sit down low enough. If you can wrap your arms around the stone you can either get a grip where you weave your fingers together, or you can clasp your hands together. If you cannot wrap your hands around the stone you can then take one of two grips. You can either hold on to the stone with a hammer style grip, or put one hand on the bottom of the stone and the other on the side. In order to grip the bottom of the stone, you need strong finger strength, and it is something that needs to be trained before trying it in a competition. Once you have established your grip it is time to begin walking. The faster you can walk, the more ground you can cover. Be careful not to hold your breath while walking as I have seen many people pass out during hussafell carries. When carrying a hussafell over a line where you must then turn around, in my experience it is best to walk through the line rather than lunge for the line with one leg. Walking through the line and doing a nice easy turn around takes less out of you then trying to lunge with a foot and you may miss the line with your foot which will cost even more time and energy having to try again. You want a slight lean with the hussafell but not too far back as that would make it even more difficult to breathe, and much tougher to walk with. The lean should be just enough to ensure that the stone isn't slipping down the shirt. Stay in a straight line as much as possible. When things start to get tough the key is to simply gut

it out. You can always go a little further than you think you can. I have rarely ever seen someone successfully rest with a stone during a run. Some have tried squatting down with the stone in the lap to take a rest, but they usually don't go much further than that once they begin the run again. I have seen Derek Poundstone successfully go to one knee and then get significantly more distance. But Derek is the exception and not the rule. It is usually better to just try to keep walking until you can carry the stone no further without trying to take a rest.

## ARM OVER ARM PULL

To start off on the arm over arm pull you will want to get all of the tension out of the rope before you take your final grip. When you get your final grip it should be way out in front of you. You should then squat down and get all of the tension on the rope, if you are too high up at the start you won't have enough tension and this will cost you some time as you sit down and try to pull on the rope. Your initial pull should be as violent a pull as possible. You should go to a sitting position and throw your head and shoulders back and press with the legs. The real key to the arm over arm pull begins when the first pull is done. The second that you finish that first pull you must get back to the rope as quickly as possible and thus keep tension on the rope. When re-gripping the rope you should also slide forward and bend the legs in order to get the legs involved in every pull. Throw your shoulders and head back again as hard as you can to get the most out of every pull. A way to help with the sliding forward on each pull is to put some baby powder down on the ground where you will be pulling. This will help reduce friction and can really help speed up your time. Just as I mentioned with the harness and rope pull, a great way to train the arm over arm is with the Exergenie-

<http://store.oddehaugen.com/?Click=323> Use discount code strongman10 to get 10% off the Exergenie!

## CONAN'S WHEEL

Conan's wheel is a tough event to coach, as it seems that you are either good at it or not, and this largely has to do with body type. Taller leaner athletes with long arms tend to do better. If you have a bigger belly and shorter arms this event can be brutal because of how the weight rests on your stomach and makes breathing difficult. Never the less, there are a few pointers that can help to maximize your effort on the event. Always remember to chalk the shirt, forearms, and biceps and hands, on both sides. Basically chalk is your friend here. When you set up on the Conan's wheel you want to put the bar in the crook of the arms. The grip with the hands is a personal thing. Some interlock thumbs and some grab the wrist with one hand. I personally always grabbed my right wrist with my left hand. I saw Jouko Ahola do this when I was younger and I just always did it that way and I have to say that Conan's wheel was always one of my best events. I feel that interlocking the thumbs places too much stress on the shoulders to hold the weight up. The bar of a Conan's should be simply resting in the crook of the arms and you shouldn't be holding the bar up. Ultimately you will have to try out which works best for you. As you stand up with the weight it is best to let out a breath as people, myself included can have a tendency to black out on the Conan's. When you stand up you should have a slight lean back with the upper body. Take a medium stride on your first step and don't start off too fast. As you get comfortable you can increase speed, but always maintain a still upper body. If your upper body begins moving around it will throw you off and you could lose the Conan's out in front of you. Never lean back too far on the Conan's wheel as this. You should remember to breathe on the Conan's wheel.

## STRONGMAN TRAINING

It has been said that strongman training is an art, not a science. I will argue that it is both. There may not be a more difficult sport to figure out how to train for. The ultimate goal of strongman is to become the perfect all around strength athlete. This means that you must have brute maximum strength, repetition strength, static strength, explosive strength, grip strength as well as functional mobility. So how can you fit all of the

necessary gym training during the week and still maximize training on the events? Most of the strongman events train the same muscles as a squat and deadlift so how can someone recover properly? You may be training or competing in an event in which you need brute strength for a max effort overhead, you may need short term muscular endurance to perform maximum reps in a squatting event. You may need explosiveness to throw a weight for height or distance. You may be moving stones, cars, trucks, logs, kegs, or even other humans. You also have other variables such as climate and weather. Strongman has an infinite set of variables to contend with, but ultimately you must be strong. To get strong there are certain fundamentals that are the basis of any strongman training program. You must squat, you must deadlift and you must be able to press overhead. Let's look at the sport of powerlifting. These athletes too must be strong, but they don't show up to a meet and find out they are doing a maximum effort pull-up. The parameters are set and their training is reflective of that. They get strong by the same movements that strongmen do, but the application of their strength is different. We can make the analogy that mixed martial arts is to fighting what strongman is to strength, in that both encompass numerous disciplines. Just as mixed martial arts produces the best all-around fighters in the world, so strongman produces the best all-around strength athlete possible.

## SQUATS

The role of squats in strongman is as a whole misunderstood. Squats are cornerstone of any good strength training protocol, no question about it. However, in strongman squats take on more of an assistance role than a primary movement roll. The reason for this is that the majority of strongman contests do not actually have a squat in them. World's Strongest Man is one of the few contests that actually does have a squat. Because of this squats are used as a means to strengthen the legs, posterior chain and overall body strength in order to become better at the strongman events. A good way to prepare for all of the challenges and events that strongman presents, is to vary what kind of squat you train. There are many variations of squat to choose from. In

strongman you are constantly lifting in various angles and positions. Thus it is best to train many different types of squats. Here are the variations to throw in the mix.

#### Squat:

- High Bar close stance Olympic squat
- Wide Stance Powerlifting Squat with Regular Bar
- Front squats
- Squats with Chains
- Squats with Bands
- Squat with an Axle
- Box Squats
- Cambered Bar Squats – Deep or Shallow Camber
- Safety Squat Bar
- Zercher Squat
- Partial Rep Squat

A good recommendation for which kind of squat you should train is based on your strengths and weaknesses. If deadlift is your weakness you should frequently train box squats and front squats. If you feel like your quad strength is a weakness on push press, truck pull, sled drags, etc. then close stance higher bar squats are the way to go for you. If you feel like you are not getting enough hip drive on stones and other events, or your posterior chain is a weakness, wider stance power squats and box squats are the way to go.



## LEG/ SQUAT ASSISTANCE WORK:

- Lunges – Stationary, Walking, or Step Back versions
- Step-ups
- Leg Press
- Leg Extensions
- Hip Thrusts
- Sled Drag
- Prowler Push

In my own personal training method, The Cube Method for Strongman, I do not include two day a week pressing. However it can be a very effective way to train the overhead. Many great overhead pressers do a twice a week press routine. Often times this method incorporates one day of strict pressing and or bench press work, and then one day a week of working with the implements themselves. Of course this is not the only way to do it, but it is a very effective method of training the overhead. Many find that the muscles involved with pressing, the shoulders triceps, and upper chest, recover quickly. This allows for more than one training session a week.

## Overhead Assistance Work:

- Incline Press – Dumbbell or Barbell
- Bench Press – with varying grips
  - o Board Presses
  - o Rack Lockouts
  - o Floor Presses

- Close Grip
  - SlingShot
  - Chains
  - Bands
- Front Raises
- Lateral Raises
- Overhead Triceps Extensions
- Lying Triceps Extensions
- Pushdowns of all varieties (with bands is my favorite)
- Dips

## GRIP TRAINING

Grip strength is imperative in strongman. Many times people give grief to strongman for wearing straps on the deadlift. The truth is however, that as a whole strongmen have the strongest grips in the world, and the grip is usually the last thing that will go on deadlift for strongman. We allow straps on the deadlift because we have other events that are much tougher tests of grip strength (farmers walk, hercules holds etc.) than deadlift. So we make the deadlift purely a test of back and leg strength rather than grip. Although the grip is trained on the farmers walk training, I feel there are many people who could use some more direct grip work. So on the days where farmers walk is trained it is also good to do farmers holds for time. This is a great way to further tax the grip. It is my belief that when grip is trained to failure like this that it should only be done every other week rather than every week. This comes from experience on my own part as well as training and speaking with other athletes on grip training. It seems that when the grip is really blasted on a weekly basis it can actually start to go backwards. The way the farmer's holds are done is very simple. You simply put a weight on the farmers

walk handles deadlift them up and then hold on for dear life, and see how long you can hold on. It is best to put a weight on that you can hold on to for 40 seconds to a minute, so you will need someone timing you or a clock somewhere in view in order to time this. On the next Grip training put the same weight on and try to hold on longer than the last time. One you can hold on to a weight for 50 seconds to a minute it is time to add some more weight the next week. There are other ways to train grip, but not all ways are beneficial for strongman. For instance doing grippers like the captain of crush are a fun test of grip strength, but using them for strengthening the grip for strongman is counter-productive. Grippers train crushing strength whereas strongman requires supportive grip strength, therefore it is best to train accordingly. Another good option for training grip strength is to do axle holds for time. The concept is the same here, except you are using an axle rather than farmers. I throw these into my training mostly when I have an axle clean and press in my training. When I do an axle clean and press for reps I power clean and press every rep rather than continental clean. Sometimes this requires that I step up my grip training in order to hold on to the axle. If it is your goal to power clean the axle it is a good idea to throw in some axle holds in order to make sure your grip is solid. I like to do these after I have trained the axle clean and press on the overhead day.

## STRONGMAN CONDITIONING

In strongman you must have good conditioning. This is not to be confused with athleticism and agility, which we will discuss later. The more conditioned you are the better you will be on the rest of the events in the competition, as you are more quickly recovered. Mariusz Pudzianowski is a great example of the benefits of this type of training. Many people just quickly dismiss his conditioning to "enhancement". The truth of the matter is he simply out trained everyone. He did more volume and took shorter rest times than everyone else. So when he got to the competition he was always better conditioned than everyone else. To simply dismiss this as only chemical enhancement is an example of a lazy mindset. The truth is most people are lazy in their training and aren't willing to do things that suck. On most Saturday event days many people will do

one all out set on an event, and take 30 minutes before doing another event. This is not a good way to increase conditioning. The best way to increase conditioning is to do more than one run on an event with very little rest in between sets. At first this will suck, a lot. You might feel like you are going to die but you will be surprised how quickly your conditioning will improve with just a couple of training sessions like this. The old saying suffer in training laugh in the competition is very appropriate here. Push yourself through and you will see the results. Imagine going to a contest and not even being out of breathe after an event, and perfectly ready to go on the next event, and then the next, while everyone else is sucking wind and laid out on the ground, barely making it out to start the next event.

Although the events themselves are still the best way to condition, if you are going to do conditioning keep it in the same time range of strongman events. Most strongman events fall somewhere within the 90 second range. The first 4-20 seconds of this are considered the creatine pathway, and from 30 seconds to 4 minutes you are in the glycolytic phase. If you are going to do conditioning outside of the events themselves you will want to keep your conditioning with this time frame, and keep it high intensity. This will keep your body conditioned within the energy systems that are specific to strongman.

#### WHAT ABOUT CARDIO FOR GENERAL HEALTH?

Longer cardio (aerobic phase) can be done for heart health in a strongman program. Of course there are benefits of cardio such as increasing blood flow which will help with recovery, and it is always good to have a strong heart in general. There is some real debate about whether or not frequent cardio has a negative effect on strength gains. Some have done really well incorporating frequent cardio in there training programs while others find that they get weaker. It is good to experiment yourself to see how it affects you.

## SPEED AND AGILITY

One main area where strongman differs from other strength sports is in the need to develop speed and agility, as well as a conditioning base. However there is a need for strongmen to train for athleticism as well. If you want to be the very best you can be in strongman but do not realize this need and you will never reach your full potential. Fat un-athletic strongmen very rarely do well at a high level. Even Zydrunas Savickas, who is 400 pounds and may not appear to be athletic, can move extremely well and is hardly out of breath in any strongman competition.

Do you have to do agility? I think all strongmen can benefit from agility training, but some need it more than others. If you are naturally athletic and agility is not a problem for you, then perhaps agility done in the events themselves may be enough for you. But for others it is crucial to do some kind of footwork and sprint work. The idea is not to become Usain Bolt, but rather be able to move your body as quickly as you can in order to shave off seconds from your time. Many times when athletes begin gaining weight, they become slower and lose some athleticism. So this is another reason to add in some agility to make sure that you stay quick.

For a good strongman agility program see my books the Cube Method for Strongman versions 1 and 2. In The Cube Method for Strongman we do conditioning and agility training twice per week. Get the Cube Method for Strongman 1 and 2 here-  
<http://startingstrongman.com/shop/products/cube-method-for-strongman-2-0/>

## STRONGMAN WARM UP

The following is a good example of a strongman warm up

### General Warm-up – Overhead Day

1. Foam Rolling- get into the lats and rear delts with a softball
2. Shoulder complex warm up/stress with PVC pipe.
3. Jump rope for 3-5 minutes
4. Overhead squats with an empty bar

### General Warm-up – Squat/Deadlift Day and Event Day

1. Light Foam Rolling the hips
2. Mobility exercises
  - a. Leg swings
  - b. Fire Hydrants (I do these standing, not on the floor)
  - c. Bodyweight squats
  - d. Static Lunge stretch (concentrate on stretching the hip flexors and squeeze the glute)
3. Kettlebell swings to help warm up the lower back
4. On event days I will do some light jogging.

\*The exercises above are my staples that I do regardless of the events trained

The following is a sample of the type of training program that I used when I started out in strongman. It is very basic but a good program and I saw good results. My training has evolved much over the years until I created what I feel to be the best way to train for strongman- The Cube Method for Strongman. The Cube for Strongman is the most comprehensive strongman training program there is and is used by thousands of people including pro's from all over the world. You can get both versions 1 and 2 together at-

<http://startingstrongman.com/shop/products/cube-method-for-strongman-2-0/>

FOR ONLINE CUSTOM TRAINING PROGRAM AND COACHING EMAIL ME-  
[Jthigpeninc@gmail.com](mailto:Jthigpeninc@gmail.com)

Again, this program is NOT the Cube Method for Strongman, but a good basic program.

### Basic Strongman Program

#### Tuesday

Squats (usually box squats) 3 x 5-8

Deadlift 3 x 4

Barbell rows 3 x 8

Shrugs 3 x 10

#### Thursday

Overhead (log, axle etc.) press 3x 5-8

Close grip bench press 3 x 5-8

Seated dumbbell shoulder press 3 x 5-8

Overhead tricep extensions 2 x 10

Tricep pushdowns 2 x 10

#### Saturday

Yoke- warm up to top weight and go for 2 sets for a time

Farmers- same protocol as Yoke

Stones- run through a series of stones 2 times for speed

Any other events we had in a contest coming up such as truck pull or medleys etc.



## HOW TO TRAIN WITHOUT EQUIPMENT

Although there is no replacement of the actual strongman equipment (go to <http://startingstrongman.com> to learn how to buy or make equipment), there are ways to train if you simply cannot get any equipment. Anybody can do an overhead press with a bar, so take a bar and do presses and clean and presses. If you don't have access to a thick bar of any kind, using a regular bar is still better than nothing. You can also take dumbbells at a regular gym and press them with your palms facing towards each other to mimic the pressing of a log. For grip you can take a barbell in the rack and load it up with weight and do front holds for time. You can also place two bars in a rack get in between them and pick them up like a farmers walk and do holds that way. It is tough to balance the bars like this but it is still good training. If a gym has a trap bar you can also do farmers walk/frame carry with this. If you have no access to equipment you should also really focus on building up bicep strength. Not for vanity's sake, but because almost all events in strongman require an immense amount of bicep strength. Going into strongman with strong biceps is a huge advantage. If you have access to an elliptical machine, you can set the resistance high and go backwards, and this will really mimic a sled drag. Believe me, you will really feel the burn in the legs in the same spot that you would a sled drag. You can also train stones by loading up a piece of pipe or a steel bar and load 45 pound plates on there, assuming the plates are round. The lift is a similar feel to stone lifting.

## WHAT TO DO THE LAST 2 WEEKS GOING INTO A COMPETITION

The final two weeks leading into a competition are for recovering and letting the body come in rested, recovered and strong. The training has been done in the weeks leading up to the contest and now it is time to come in at your best. Of course, you don't want to do nothing during these weeks. The way it typically breaks down is that you do one week of light training and the final week is a rest week. So on the next to last week you are keeping your main movements at no more than 60-70 percent and the rest of training is bodybuilding. The final deload week consists of getting blood moving during the week, stretching, massage, ice baths, etc. but no serious weight training. You can

do a light session or two with weights during the last week but you want it to be extremely light. I would typically load 135 on the bar and go through a full body session just to pump blood into the muscles. I would run through 2-3 sets of one exercise per body part. These would typically be squats, clean and press, deadlifts, and rows. After this session I would stretch. Following this protocol will help you come in fresh and at your best, you will feel very strong on the day of the contest and come in ready to rock and roll.

## STRONGMAN FOOTWEAR

Footwear is of the upmost importance in strongman. Most strongman bags are completely full of different types of shoes. For pressing events, and other events like stones, and keg toss, most strongmen prefer some kind of lifting shoe. This can be either an Olympic weightlifting shoe, or powerlifting shoe. The heels on these shoes are built up which forces the athlete to sit back. These lifting shoes also provide more support than the typical lifting shoe and are very solid. They give you a feeling of almost being stuck to the floor, so as to minimize instability. Still others use chuck taylors on overhead. Chucks have been very commonly used on movement events like yoke as well. One of the more popular movement event shoes are soccer shoes like the Nike samba. Whilst others opt for shoes with more heel support like basketball shoes. Much of this comes down to personal choice and the way your foot is shaped. For example my feet have very high arches, so I always wanted a shoe that was a little more flat on the bottom. I even felt more comfortable wearing weightlifting shoes on the yoke than regular athletic shoes. I also had a lot of ankle twisting issues in high school so I preferred something with more heel support. I also went for something with a really good grip on the bottom especially for dragging events. Of course for truck pull rock climbing shoes are the way to go. The specially made rubber gets a great grip on the ground.

## NEOPRENE

One look at a strongman competition and it will become obvious that neoprene is very widely used amongst strongman. There are Neoprene elbow sleeves, neoprene knee sleeves, calve sleeves, shorts, pants, and belts. I have seen some competitors almost completely decked out from head to toe in neoprene. But what does it do, and does it work?

Neoprene is used as both supportive gear and as a heating agent. Placing neoprene elbow supports on the arms may heat up the elbows, biceps and triceps faster than without them, especially when some kind of topical heating agent is used with the neoprene. The overall warm up process can be encouraged with the addition of neoprene by warming up the body's core temperature. Neoprene equipment can also offer a bit of support for the joints and make an athlete feel more solid or stable on an event. If the Gear is tight enough, an athlete may also get a small amount of additional poundage on a lift by wearing sleeves. For example tight knee sleeves on the squat, and elbow sleeves for the overhead. Neoprene shorts are used to heat up the hips, lower back, glutes, and legs. Neoprene can be a great tool in your strongman arsenal, get your neoprene products here-

<https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> use discount promo code thigpen to get a 10% discount!

<http://www.jackalsgym.com/> Jackals gym has been a trusted name for neoprene gear for many years. The business is ran by World's Strongest Man competitor Karl Gillingham and it's customer service is second to none.



## HEAT RUBS

Heat rubs use varying ointments and chemicals in order to heat the body. One of the most common ingredients in these is capsaicin. This is the same acid that gives peppers their hot taste. When applied to the skin it will heat up the area causing blood to rise in the affected area. Other applications incorporate a cooling agent with the heat.

## AMMONIA

Ammonia is a gas that can be used in strongman as a stimulant. Ammonia is the same thing used for smelling salts to wake up someone who has passed out, so it should become apparent how powerful ammonia is. Many strongmen use ammonia to get themselves ready for a big lift or event. One smell of ammonia can get your very focused and fired up. Most say that ammonia gives them a huge adrenaline rush and allow them to lift more than they would without it. Ammonia comes in breakable capsules, tearable packets, jugs, and in something called nose torque where it is in a small bottle with cotton in it. It may take some getting used to it as the first hit of ammonia can be very shocking. A strong enough hit can feel like sticking a sparkler up your nose, but it will wake you up! Not everyone sees any benefit from ammonia however.

## HOW TO WARM UP WHEN THERE IS NO WARM UP

In strongman it is very rare to get adequate warm up before events at a competition. Forget your normal warm up routine in training, you'll have to improvise. Bringing bands with you can be a very good way to help warm up. You can do curls, presses, rows, and put the band around your neck and do good mornings for the lower back. If you don't have bands sometimes you can do a warm up with another person by getting a towel and have them provide some resistance while you do some exercises. Sometimes you will have to get creative. At the World's Strongest Man in 2006 there was no good way to warm up with a lighter weight on the car walk using the car itself. So Phil Pfister

loaded up a bar with 315 pounds and walked up and down the course with it. He won the event and won the title. If there is nothing better to warm up with sometimes just do some bodyweight squats, calf raises or whatever you can think of to get warmed up. A key point here though, is that if you do get good warm up at the contest, make sure that you don't warm up too much. I have seen many competitors try to be "warm up champs", and then do terribly on the event itself. Do enough in warm up to get you ready for the event, but don't wear yourself out or try and impress anybody with your warm ups. Save it for the competition.

## COMPETITION PACKING CHECKLIST

I'll be the first to say that when I began strongman I was that guy. I was the guy that borrowed everything from everybody. When I went to a contest I had to ask for chalk, tacky, snacks, and even a belt. Yep that's right a belt. For the first 3-4 years of my training and competing I didn't even own a lifting belt. I would pack one little bag for a contest that had one or two changes of clothes and some cheap neoprenes from the store. There was a part of me that took pride in being so minimalistic. I enjoyed just showing up and competing without having to go through the whole process of putting on tons of equipment. But eventually I realized that I needed more. If I was going to really excel at stones, I needed tacky and a belt for deadlifts, and so on and so forth. I didn't have the equipment so I had to ask for it. This began to get old to other competitors and myself. In strongman most athletes are always willing to help out another competitor, but having to lend everything you own out at a contest can be really distracting. I can remember asking a fellow competitor for a piece of bread and a few slices of an orange because my blood sugar was so low from competing all day. This was an all time low for me and I decided it was time to get my act together with contest packing.

When I began packing my own stuff and bringing equipment, my performance even improved. When you have your own equipment, or "kit" as the Brits call it, it is one less thing to deal with. You can concentrate 100 percent on the competition. If I'm being

honest, from time to time I still have to borrow something here or there. But as a whole I am now the guy that other people are borrowing equipment from instead of the other way around. That's the strongman you want to be, the lender not the borrower. At World's Strongest Man this year, an athlete who shall remain nameless, didn't bring a thing. Yes this even happens at the world level. I and another athlete let him borrow everything. In fact he told me, "You are like my Father." When this athlete flew back to his country, I helped him order some bands, tacky and other things online. Now he will show up much more prepared for his next contest. It's crazy how it has all come full circle.

The best way to ensure that you pack everything is with a checklist. I am not a naturally organized person, so I war against things like this most of the time. But a checklist is vital to ensure that you have everything for your contest. You won't have to wonder if you packed everything. You can just look at your list and see that everything is checked off. Frankly you should pack everything. Even if you don't think you will need something for a contest pack it. This is strongman, they can and will change the events at a moment's notice. I once competed in a contest that didn't have a truck pull so most athletes didn't pack their truck pull shoes. It turned out there was a tire flip sled drag medley and the pavement was too slippery for regular shoes. However, truck pull shoes had a great grip on the surface. Most of the other guys were slipping and couldn't finish the event. But I put on my truck pull shoes and finished and won the event. Needless to say I was very glad I packed the shoes!

The following is a good checklist whether you are a first time competitor or a veteran. Copy and paste this and then print it out to check off everything as you pack for your next contest.-

-Moving event shoes

-Lifting shoes (weightlifting or powerlifting)

-Truck pull shoes (even if you don't have a truck pull)

-Lifting belt (both a power belt and lighter belts if you use them) <https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> Use promo code thigpen to get 10% off all lifting belts.

-Chalk (do not assume the contest will provide chalk, bring your own and put it in tupperware so it does not get crushed)

-Tacky (if you fly this will get confiscated if you take it on a carry on so put it in checked bag. Also either put it in Tupperware or duct tape it closed because it can and will spill out all over your bag.) Elite tacky is the best tacky out there used by the top pros in strongman get it at – <http://www.jackalsgym.com/>

-Stone sleeves (if you wear them)- <http://4armourstrong.com/>

-WD-40, Go Jo, or baby oil for tacky removal

-Neoprene equipment (elbow sleeves knee sleeves etc.) <https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> use promo code thigpen for 10% off all orders. You can also get neoprene at <http://jackalsgym.com>



-Warm up bands (lifting bands are great to bring along for warming up because often times there is little to no warm up in strongman)

-Lifting straps <https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> use promo code thigpen to get 10 % off all lifting straps and products.

-Wrist wraps <https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> use promo code thigpen to get 10 % off all wrist wraps and products.

-Knee Wraps <https://www.giants-pro.com/?ref=15> use promo code thigpen to get 10% off all knee wraps and products.

-Squat suit

-Deadlift suit

-Mouth piece (if you wear one)

-Snacks for the contest (fruit, bars, or whatever you want. Most contests last all day and you will need to stay fueled up)

-Supplements (If flying you have 3 options, either pack in your carry on, bring unopened supps in your checked bag, or duck tape it closed in your checked bag. TSA can and will open your stuff and not even close it. It will then spill all over your bag. I learned this

the hard way) get the strongman supplement stack here-

<http://oddhaugen.dotfit.com/strongmansuperstack> and use discount code strongman10 to get 10% off your order!

- Sun tan lotion

- Competition shorts (most contests will provide a contest shirt, but not shorts.)

- Myofascial release equipment (Rolling sticks, pvc or foam roller, softball etc. Whatever you use)

- Athletic tape

- Heat rub (equiblock, capsaican or whatever you use)

- Ammonia (if you use it. If using caps, always put in Tupperware so they don't get crushed. If bottled nose torque either put in Tupperware or tape up)

This list should be pretty comprehensive, but if you think of anything else add it to the list. Having everything you need can make a world of difference. Remember it is way better to over pack than under pack. You may have to get creative with your packing skills or get a bigger bag, but it will be worth it! With all of this out of the way you will be ready to dominate the competition!

## STRONGMAN NUTRITION

Strongman nutrition has been a long neglected aspect of the strongman lifestyle. One may wonder what is different from a strongman nutrition program from any other nutrition program? Is it the same as powerlifting or football, or weightlifting? The answer to this is that strongman has its own set of challenges that requires special attention. Strongman events are strength based but also require an immense amount of conditioning and heart strength. Gone are the days of fat, slobby strongmen being successful. A strongman athlete needs to have brute strength but also must be able to move around quickly.

There are many things that could be covered for nutrition which cannot all fit in this book. For the most comprehensive look at performance nutrition and a strongman meal plan get the Performance Nutrition Encyclopedia at -

<http://startingstrongman.com/shop/products/performance-nutrition-encyclopedia/>

There tends to be a habit of strongmen to at some point get as big and bulky as possible, as quickly as possible. When you see other athletes bigger and stronger than you it is natural to want to bulk up to get on that level. But this is hardly ever the best idea in strongman. When you bulk up quickly you rarely put on good functional muscle, it is usually made of water and fat weight. This may have some benefit on one or two events, but as a whole it will slow you down in strongman. The better approach is to stay patient and eat in such a way that you are putting on muscle over time and not fat and water weight.

More muscle means more strength, fat will just slow you down. That being said, there is also no need to eat as clean as a bodybuilder in contest prep mode. If you want a snack like a pizza or ice cream, it's not going to kill you. In strongman the key is to have the majority of your nutrition centered on recovery etc. This balance will also help you stay on your nutrition plan. Remember to plan ahead. Prepare meals all at once and make them ahead of time in order to be ready to go so that you can eat the way that is

needed. This is the way to get better which is to take the food with you wherever you go. The key to all sports specific nutrition plans is first assessing your goals and then being consistent with your nutrition. There are a few basic principles that will hold true no matter what your goals are.

The best bet with any performance nutrition plan is to eat as many whole foods as you can. In other words, foods that are by themselves complete. The fewer the ingredients the better. Foods like fruits, vegetable, oats, rice, eggs, meats, etc. are all examples of whole foods. These foods are more easily digested by the body and tend to be filled with more vitamins and minerals.

## STRONGMAN SUPPLEMENTATION

### MULTIVITAMIN

It is true that we can and should get the majority of the vitamins and nutrients that we need from regular food. However, in today's world, that is not always likely or possible. Because of this it can be beneficial to supplement with a multivitamin. Especially for an athlete that is sweating out vitamins and nutrients during training. It is just a safe bet to go ahead and make sure that there are no deficiencies. Get a solid multivitamin here- <http://bit.ly/1O2mQmv> and enter discount code strongman10 for a 10% discount.

### FISH OIL

Fish oil has been shown to have many benefits to heart health, mood and mental health, and works as a powerful anti-inflammatory. Fish oil is packed with omega 3 fatty acids. These fatty acids are called essential because the human body needs them. But the human body cannot make these fatty acids on its own and therefore must get them from an outside source. I recommend Super Omega 3 by dotfit, get it here- <http://bit.ly/1O2lHez> use discount code strongman10 to get 10% off.

## PRE WORKOUT

Some form of a pre workout has been used for many years. One of the original pre workouts was coffee. This remains a simple and effective way to get some caffeine and energy for your workouts. Pre-workouts can be of benefit if they help improve performance. Just be careful to not come to rely on the pre-workout for your workout motivation or energy. When a pre-workout has been taken too long it can become difficult to workout without it. Always be able to get amped up for training and competing with or without stimulants. The pre-workout I would recommend is-

NO7RAGE Mixed Berry- <http://bit.ly/1OZDCj9>

OR NO7RAGE lemonade- <http://bit.ly/1OZEhr6>

Use promo code strongman10 to get 10% off!

## CREATINE

There is no supplement that has been studied or proven to work more than creatine monohydrate. In terms of muscle and strength gains it has to be seen as the "King" of supplements. It is of huge benefit for a strongman in particular. In fact in my opinion every strongman athlete should be taking creatine. Many events in strongman are repetition events that can deplete the ATP stores in the muscle. Creatine helps shuttle more ATP into the muscles allowing for more contraction, and thus more reps. Being able to get more reps or contraction in strongman training or competing is obviously of huge benefit. Creatine has also been shown to increase recovery, aid in fat loss, and can have the benefit of lean weight gain. For a great creatine product I recommend Creatine XXL- <http://bit.ly/1mhgymH> by dotfit. Use discount code strongman10 to get 10% off!

## PROTEIN POWDER

Protein synthesis is the process of how muscles repair themselves. So it's obvious to see why protein powder is valuable to a strongman's supplement arsenal. In my opinion, the three best times to drink a protein shake are 1. Immediately post workout because a liquid whey protein is the fastest way to get protein into the system to begin the repair process 2. Upon waking because your body has been in a fasted state 3. When traveling or time restricted, a shake is a convenient way to get protein and calories. I recommend All Natural WheySmooth by dotfit get it here –

Chocolate - <http://bit.ly/1P3FIWu>

Vanilla - <http://bit.ly/1P3GGwq>

## AMINO ACIDS

Amino acids are what our muscles are made of. There is some evidence of branch chain amino acids increasing work capacity and aiding in recovery. In my own experience I have felt stronger when supplementing with BCAA's I recommend AminoBoostXXL from dotfit.

Get the AminoBoostXXL Mixed Berry – <http://bit.ly/1O3STIW>

Or AminoBoostXXL Lemonade- <http://bit.ly/1O3T5BA>

## STRONGMAN SUPPLEMENT SUPER STACK

Odd Haugen, the ageless Viking strongman legend and multiple time WSM competitor, has created a supplement stack specifically geared towards strongmen. Odd is an executive of the most scientifically backed supplement companies out there, dotfit. This stack comes with 3 strongman essentials – creatine, pre-workout and BCAA's. Save

money by purchasing these 3 products together as the super stack and get an additional 10% off when you use discount code strongman10 get it here-

<http://oddhaugen.dotfit.com/strongmansuperstack>

## BAKING SODA

This has really been one of the best kept secrets in the strength world and sports in general. Baking soda, if tolerated can be an outstanding tool in the strongman arsenal. When I say tolerated I mean that baking soda tends to cause stomach issues for some at high enough doses. The key to baking soda is that the body produces lactic acid during strongman events which inhibits the athlete from continuing on in an event. Baking soda is a lactic acid buffer and can help an athlete achieve better results in training and competition. The amounts that have to be drank for baking soda to be effective are extremely high. It takes upwards of 200-300 mgs per kilogram of bodyweight to be effective. This amount is often what drives athletes away from baking soda as the taste is pretty overwhelming. When the taste is combined with the explosive diarrhea that it can cause, it is obvious why many are unable to use it.

## STRONGMAN CONTEST EATING

With most strongman contests lasting all day it is very important to be prepared to have food with you for the long haul. If you don't have some kind of food throughout the day, your blood sugar and energy levels will completely crash. A lot of people have a difficult time eating on the morning of competition as well. When nerves are high it can be difficult to really put any food down. But it is necessary to eat something on game day. The best approach is eating something completely bland and free of grease or anything else that will mess with your stomach more than it already is. Some good choices are oatmeal, banana's, bread, pretzels, eggs, protein powder. Throughout the day fruit is a good choice as it will keep your blood sugar steady, give some energy and help with hydration. Sipping a drink with carbohydrates throughout the day is also very valuable in keeping blood sugar levels up throughout the day. This can be fruit juice, regular Gatorade, or any number of carbohydrate supplement drinks out there.



## STRONGMAN RECOVERY METHODS

Strongman recovery should be taken very seriously. I truly believe that this is an area where many strongman slack in, at least on the American level. Europeans and other countries outside of the U.S. are adamant about recover and take the necessary steps to maximize it. Always remember that we get stronger in our recovery. The training is the stimulus that causes the repair and adapt, but it must have a chance to repair. Faster recover leads to the ability to train at a higher level more often. This leads to more steady progress and leaves the athlete feeling better all around during times of serious training. Strongmen should incorporate both passive and active recovery methods. Below are some good examples of both-

### PASSIVE RECOVERY-

#### SLEEP

This seems pretty obvious but the importance of sleep cannot be overstated. The body repairs itself during sleep more than any other time. Testosterone and growth hormone are released at higher levels than when awake. The total rest during sleep allows the body to focus its repair where it needs it the most. If you are having trouble sleeping melatonin can be a great way to help fall asleep. Life can sometimes make getting proper sleep very difficult, but if you want to maximize your gains you must find a way.

#### MASSAGE

Massage can be a great way to aid in recovery. This will help you stay loose, by digging into knots, breaking up free radicals, and increasing blood flow. It can also be a stress

reliever. Reducing stress in your life can aid in recovery. Stress causes your body to release catabolic hormones.

## ICE BATH AND HOT AND COLD THERAPY

Ice baths are a tried and true method of decreasing soreness and improving recovery abilities. I am not sure that the use of such methods has been proven in studies, but real life experience shows that it seems to work. Ice baths can also relax your body and help you sleep better if done right before bed. Heat can be great for pain and recovery as well, especially for the back. If I had lower back problems I always felt more benefits from heat rather than cold. For everything else however, I prefer cold. You can even try contrast going back and forth from hot and cold for a few minutes at a time. Some have had great success with such methods.

## ACTIVE RECOVERY

Active recovery is when you move around and actively increase the blood flow throughout the body. This can be done in several ways. Swimming is a great way to do active recovery, so is going for walks or even going to the gym and doing very light workouts just to get the body moving. Blood carries oxygen to the body and helps it to repair. Pick a method that you prefer and you will see the benefits of active recovery. Stretching is another form of active recovery. Stretching can increase blood flow into the muscles

## WHAT I WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

I have been asked what I would do differently in my strongman career if I could go back. I thought it would be good to share with everybody else here. Hopefully some of these messages will help others along the way.

1. Be patient- If I could go back I would be more patient in my strongman career. I would have been ok with slow progression and reaching small goals. I always felt like I didn't have enough time for small increases. For some reason I thought I only had a limited amount of time in the sport, which is true for all of us, but here I am 13 years later, still competing. Had I been ok with reaching small goals and progressing nice and easy I would of avoided injury, and not gotten as burned out along the way. I think the best example in the world of doing it properly is Zydrunas Savickas. Zydrunas's training hasn't changed much for 20 plus years in the sport. Each training cycle he just adds a little bit of weight. Over time all of those small increases have equated to the Strongest Man in history. Now at close to 40 he is stronger than ever. It has taken me a long time to realize this, but now that I have I feel better in training and competing in general. I understand that every training session doesn't have to be a 20 pound pr. The key is steady consistent training year after year. It's all about sticking with it and in time, you will be where you want to be.

2. Flexibility/mobility- If I could go back I would of focused much more on flexibility. Stretching for the most part was non existent early on in my training. I was always athletic and quick, so I just relied on that in order to keep me going. The problem was that as my training and body weight got heavier, and I got stronger, that athleticism began to diminish, and I started to have more and more aches and pains, especially in my back. I have found that for me the single most important spots to keep flexible were my hamstrings and glutes. This is common for many people, and it often is what leads to back problems. The difference in lower back pain is night and day now that I try to keep those areas loose.

3. Worry only about yourself- In contests I use to think about what other guys could do and compare my numbers and try to figure out how it would all play out in the competition. Many people do the same, especially when you see videos online from other competitors. But all of this is pointless. The only thing you can control is yourself. The only thing that matters is what you can do in training and on game day. This is your

journey, not anyone else's. When you see someone else doing more weight than you on something you can simply use it as motivation for yourself. You just keep your head down and keep training. Focus on reaching your own personal goals and you will be much happier in this sport.

4. Have fun- When I originally got into the sport I got into it simply because I loved it. I had so much fun training and competing. I would love the rawness of picking up a stone, or a wooden log. I felt alive when I would be outside lifting crazy things and feeling the adrenaline rush. Somewhere along the way it all became more stressful. Maybe when money came into the picture things changed a little bit. Going into a competition stressed out makes both your mind and body cease up and your performance suffers. When you go in loose having fun, you perform at your best. Always remember to enjoy the sport. Yes competition is fierce, and you should be focused, but this sport is way too difficult to not have fun doing it.

5. Active Recovery- This is one of the things that I really learned from the European athletes. The Europeans take recovery very seriously and do things daily to make sure they are getting the most recovery possible. Rather than just sitting around and resting, Europeans are always swimming, going for walks, stretching, getting massages, doing hot and cold therapy, saunas etc. These types of things really help speed up recovery by increasing blood flow, flushing out lactic acid, digging out knots and digging out tight spots in the body. Active recovery is common place amongst athletes all over the world, but in my experience American strength athletes have a tendency to just rest completely. I truly believe that the better option is to do something that will generate a better recovery environment than just total rest. Total rest tends to make the body tighten up, and the lack of circulation tends to keep lactic acid in the muscles and not get the vital oxygen to the muscles needed to help recover and rebuild muscle. Some of this is done in the program with agility work. It is important to remember that these days are not just for agility but a way to keep the body moving on non training days. Although I do have a day in training where I simply rest completely (Sunday) all the other days I am at least doing something for active recovery. Even on a training day

I do active recovery such as stretching post training, swimming, hot and cold therapy etc. I would have incorporated a lot more of this in my training early on in my career, as I have felt the benefits once I started doing more of this.

6. Have a plan- Although things don't always go according to plan, it is still good to try and map out what you would like to do in strongman and by when you would like to do it. Most of my career I did not do much planning. The way to do this is map out short term and long term goals and write them down. It has been shown that people who write down there goals are more likely to reach them than people who do not. For example you should pick out a contest and say I want to place top 5 or whatever your goal may be, then map out what it will take to reach that goal in your training, nutrition, recovery, and life in general, then fight like crazy to accomplish it. Do this with your training as well. You can say I would like to hit this much weight on deadlifts by this time, and then you do whatever it takes to reach that goal. You should also have long term goals, where you say that you would like to be at a certain place in your career, i.e. turn pro, top 3 at nationals win worlds strongest man, it doesn't matter what it is, but put a date on it. Then as you consistently reach your short term training and competition goals a long the way you will eventually reach that long term goal. For some of you reading this it may seem obvious, but if you are like me it does not come naturally to you. My mind does not work in an organized planned out process. I have to force myself to plan and organize things out. A little bit of planning can go a long way in your training and career.

7. Always be willing to learn- This may not be something I would do differently as I feel Like I have always been like a sponge when it comes to learning, but it is a valuable lesson none the less. It is my experience that the people who know the least in the sport, are the least open to learning from others, and the ones who know the most and are the most accomplished, are the most open to always learning. As baffling as it is, often times the least experienced guys already feel like they know everything. But I can promise you if I saw something in a fellow pro strongman's technique, or program or whatever that could benefit them they would be willing to listen. Even Brian Shaw or

Zavickas are still willing to learn, as they are always open to getting better and hearing new things. Always be willing to learn more, and improve, because frankly there will never be a time that you know it all.

8. Stay positive-Early on in my career if an event didn't go my way, especially at the beginning of the contest, it would affect the rest of my contest. I would really get down on myself, and get very pissed. Of course part of that was because I expect a lot out of myself, which is a good thing, but I would let it get to me when I didn't do well. You should have a short memory in this sport. One bad event does not determine your competition, or your career. I have in time learned to put such bad events behind me and move on to the next event. I now use it in a positive way as motivation for the rest of the events. I have seen many times in competitions where an athlete will take last in the first event and still keep his focus, keep fighting and still come back and win the contest. Just look at Phil Pfister at the 2006 worlds strongest man. Phil did not place very high on the first two events. With Mauriusz Pudzianowski in the competition, it looked virtually hopeless that he could win. The only way Phil even had a chance was to win the final 5 events. And that is exactly what he did. Rather than let the first two events get him down, he remained steadfast on his goal, and fought harder than ever. He remained positive. I can remember before the competition Phil saw the WSM trophies in one of the hotel offices. He pointed at the Gold trophy and said, "There is my trophy." He had already made up his mind that nothing was going to stop him, not even a couple of bad events. His prophecy came true, and he became the first American to win Worlds Strongest Man since 1982. This principle holds true no matter what level of competition you are in. Remain positive during your training, competitions and about your future goals, and eventually you will have positive outcomes.

9. Find a good training crew and as much equipment as possible-These two things can go hand in hand. It is an absolute necessity to acquire as much equipment as possible in strongman. Sometimes this can be done by finding a training crew near you that already has the equipment, or by acquiring it on your own. Either way both things

should happen, getting a training group, and getting equipment. When I first started competing, I had no equipment and no training partners. I showed up at contests and fought hard, but If I could go back I would of done whatever it takes to get some more equipment during those first 3 years or so. Eventually I found the unit training crew here in Houston which provided a great training environment with like minded people and all of the training equipment I needed. I don't think I would of gone as far as quickly without that training crew. For one thing, all of this loading and unloading implements takes a while and is much more difficult to do on your own. But more importantly a training crew can push each other more so than you can on your own. You can compete with each other and motivate each other. The right training environment is invaluable. Make sure that the environment is positive, and conducive to improvement. A good training crew will encourage each other even if they are competing with one another. These days I mostly train on my own, but I would not be nearly as effective on my own had I not trained with a great training crew. In the beginning stages of your career it is imperative to get a group of like minded people together. You can find a training crew or gym as well as learn how to make or acquire most strongman equipment at <http://startingstrongman.com/>

10. Decide very clearly why you are in the sport- It is very important to determine exactly why you are in the sport. Some people do strongman as a hobby, and aren't necessarily concerned with going to World's Strongest Man, while others have a goal of going as far as possible. Both reasons are equally valid, and can only be determined by the individual. But be clear which one you are. If doing strongman is a hobby, then make it just that. Don't sacrifice family, friends, a social life, etc. because of the sport, you must have more balance and keep strongman in its place. Now if your goal is to become the World's Strongest Man, or go as far as you can then the truth is there are going to be some sacrifices made. I am not saying that you should sacrifice family at all, but something somewhere is going to have to give. The truth is balance is not the way to make it to the top in a sport. You must be completely devoted to the task. There can be no half effort. You will have to put aside binge drinking, partying, staying out late

and not getting any sleep. You will need to organize your life in such a way that it is completely conducive to reaching your goal. These are just the facts. If you disagree with this then you may not have a clear understanding of exactly what it takes to become the very best at a sport. Assess your life and if you really feel like you are in a position to really make a run at your goals. But either way, figure what you are competing for.

## STRONGMAN PSYCHOLOGY: HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE MIND

The goal of the strongman is to become the perfect all around strength athlete. Because of this, it is important to discuss in depth the most important strength training of all, the training of the Mind. Mental strength is the most important aspect of a successful strength athlete, yet how much attention is given to this aspect? We train as hard as we can with the events and weights, and we put a lot of attention into our nutrition, so why not mental training?

Of course mental toughness is important to do well in any sport, but especially in strongman. One of the reasons I've always loved the sport is the real world application of mind over matter. Strongman and strength sports in general are not just about lifting heavy things, there is much more to it than that. Don't get me wrong I enjoy that aspect of strongman, but if you really examine it, the sport strengthens our character, resolve and overall mental strength.

I believe that we are very limited in our understanding of just how powerful our minds are. The basis of strongman is that you have an obstacle in front of you and that obstacle must be overcome. Before you lift or move any object you must first believe that you will. I have seen people lift things that they have no business lifting whatsoever. What I mean is they literally did not have the physical strength to lift the weight, yet somehow, somehow through mental strength they forced their bodies to lift it. The body does what the mind tells it to. Once you realize this principle the possibilities are endless.



## MY INTRO TO PSYCHE: KAZ

To say that Bill Kazmaier understands the power of the mind-body connection would be an understatement. I think a better statement would be that he exemplified it. I feel very fortunate that the 1981 Worlds Strongest Man competition was the first strongman contest I ever saw. Because of this contest I got an education on the power of the mind in strongman. Perhaps if I saw just huge guys lifting things I would have thought it was cool, but I wouldn't of been quite as captivated as I was. I believe my interest was peaked because I saw the incredible focus, drive and psyche power of the Kaz. He was certainly dialed in.

The first event was the log press. The other lifters walked up to the log and maybe gave a little yell before trying to lift it. One by one they all failed at the final weight. Then came the Kaz. His approach was different from the others. He was stalking around behind the crowd. His eyes were closed and there was a look on his face of extreme intensity and focus. He stops and goes into a trance like state. His breathing changes and he is doing some serious visualization. Suddenly he bursts out of his trance, starts growling and then proceeds to grab the log and in one motion power curled all 360 pounds straight into a strict press overhead in the blink of an eye. He followed this up with the barrel load where he convinced himself the barrels were helium filled and started throwing them onto the platform. He wasn't done yet. After tearing his pec off in the bar bend he worked himself up into a frenzy and squatted 969 pounds in one of the most explosive squats I have ever seen. Next came the deadlift and Kaz ripped 940 pounds off the ground not once, but twice. Following the contest the announcer asks Kaz what his secret to psyching himself up was. His reply was, "Psyche. Gosh it's something from within. It could be possibly metaphysical. It's the ability to concentrate and draw in powers that are all around us, and focus." This was my introduction to the world's strongest man competition. I didn't need to get a degree to learn about psychology, it was right there in front of me. I have since had the opportunity to hang out and talk with Kaz many times and learn some of his secrets to mind power.

You might say that Kaz was also genetically gifted and he trained like an animal. I would agree with you. But there is much more to him than that. If you have ever spoken with him you can see that Kaz is on another plain. He speaks almost poetically and cryptically like he is from another time. I believe it is this mentality that set him apart. He may have had great genetics and trained really hard, but if he wasn't as mentally strong as he was, we would have never seen the true capabilities of Kaz.

## APPLYING WHAT I LEARNED

After seeing this amazing display of psyche I decided one day I would make it to the world's strongest man. Of course I would start to train hard, and eat as much as I could, but I also started to incorporate some mental training from a young age. Taking Kaz's lead, I started psyching myself up in training. I would mimic his growling and breathing patterns and try to focus on making the weight seem light. I tried to find different thoughts that worked for me. Over the years my ability to psyche myself up increased as I learned more and more about the power of mind over matter. For instance during one deadlift workout I was having some real trouble lifting a certain weight. It just did not want to budge. I tried a couple of times and it just wasn't happening. Often times in the deadlift if you miss a lift you are done, its just not going to happen. However, on this day I wasn't accepting that. I used some psyching up techniques and came back and ripped the weight off the floor 3 times! Now, I hadn't physically gotten stronger in those few minutes. The only difference was the change in mental thought that I had. This type of story is standard at the top level of the strongman world. The very best are able to force the body to do what they want it to do. Through proper channeling of the mind they can enforce their will on whatever is in front of them.

Mental strength is not only needed in order to lift something that is heavy, it is also needed in order to overcome extreme amounts of pain. In strongman you have to be carrying something heavy with an extreme amount of lactic acid building up while becoming extremely oxygen deprived as well. When the body starts shutting down

you will need to draw upon inner strength and constitution in order to continue on. Pain tolerance is of paramount importance in the sport.

## MENTAL TRAINING TECHNIQUES

Now that we have discussed the importance of mental strength, we can now begin to learn some ways to increase the ability to psyche oneself up and become mentally tough. I believe that some people are born with a natural ability to focus their mind. But I also believe that certain techniques can be learned to maximize ones inner strength. Here are a few things I have found to be extremely helpful.

## POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

This may seem like an obvious technique but let's really examine it. The very first step in increasing the mind power is replacing negative thinking with positive. I'm not talking about sunshine and rainbows here. I'm talking about believing you can do whatever is necessary to succeed. When doubts come in to your mind you acknowledge it, then move it to the side and replace it with a positive one. For example, if you have a competition coming up and there is a certain weight that may be a stretch for you. You are going to have to do the event so how does it benefit you to doubt yourself or think you can't do it? The answer is it doesn't help at all. It will only hurt you to think that way. If you are going to have to attempt the event anyway, why not go ahead and think positively about it in training? Why not have an un-dying belief in yourself no matter what? One thing is certain, if you don't believe you can do something you won't. When I was growing up I was a skinny, short, weak, little kid. No one would have ever thought that I would make it to the World's Strongest Man competition. I never let that stop me though. I have always felt that it was never IF I was going to make it to WSM but WHEN. I think without this belief I would have never made it. Now that is not to say that I have never had any negative thoughts or struggled with doubts in training. But in time I have learned to turn those into positive thoughts.

Start to take note of any negative thoughts that come into your mind about your abilities. This may be about an upcoming training session or a certain event you aren't good at. Start to practice replacing those negative thoughts with a positive one like, "I'm getting better on that event no matter what." I believe that positive thinking is a common trait of all champion athletes. They don't let negative thoughts stick around. Champions don't hope to do well, they EXPECT to do well. When Michael Jordan got the ball for a game winning shot attempt, he wasn't just hoping to make the shot, he naturally EXPECTED to make it. Begin to EXPECT that you can reach your goals and do anything you decide to do.

## VISUALIZATION

Visualization is one of the most important tools you have in your mental training arsenal. There are two types of visualization that I would like to discuss, meditative visualization, and active visualization. First let's discuss meditative visualization. Meditative visualization is when you take a specific time out of your day, find a quiet place and begin to visualize yourself accomplishing certain things. This could be something like actually holding the trophy at the end of a competition. You could think about feeling the sun on your face and the weight of the trophy in your hand. You can even hear the announcer calling your name as the winner of the competition. You can make it as detailed as you'd like. You start to live this out many times in your head before it ever even happens. This will cause your subconscious mind to start to expect the very thing you are visualizing to happen and your body will then follow suit when the time comes to live it out. Many champion athletes use this technique. George St. Pierre has said that when a fight is coming up he closes his eyes and over and over hears in his mind, "And still, the welterweight champion of the world!!! George St. Pierre!!!" He feels his hand being raised and feels the belt being put around his waist again. He thinks this over and over again, leading up to a fight and for the last six years, his visions have been correct. You can utilize this with a certain weight that you are going after as well.

Let's say you have a certain weight in mind as a goal that you want to one day hit on the log press. You can close your eyes and start to visualize yourself doing this. Think about how light the weight feels coming off the ground. Feel it roll up your chest explosively. See yourself taking a breath and then your entire body fires to drive the weight up overhead. Imagine it flying up very quickly because it feels so light. Over time this kind of visualization will cause the body to work to make this goal a reality.

Active visualization is when in your everyday life you are seeing yourself doing something before it happens. Rather than taking a certain time during the day and finding a quiet place you can do this at anytime and wherever you are. For instance you might be driving in your car and as you are driving you are thinking about your next squat workout. You are visualizing the weight feeling light, and you are excited about hitting your goal weight, sets and reps. If you do this throughout the day, continuously expecting to reach that goal and being excited about it, by the time your squat workout rolls around, you are now in the best possible mental state to hit that goal. This could also be right before an event in training or competition. You look at the event, and make your self believe that it weighs nothing, or even better still, that it is helium filled. If you really convince yourself of that, when you start the event it will feel exactly how you imagined it. Such is the power of the mind.

## ANGER

It may seem odd coming from a Christian evangelist to encourage anger but let me explain. I am not a fan of leading an angry life for anger's sake, or constantly being angry at your fellow man. I'm speaking of a different kind of anger. There is a time and place for anger. Even Jesus displayed serious anger upon visiting the temple and seeing what it had become. Many great men in history have accomplished much from righteous anger and indignation. The Anger I am speaking of is an anger against something that is trying to defeat you. It is an anger at something that is trying to bring you down. Indeed sometimes anger is exactly what is needed in order to move an immovable object. A one thousand pound yoke will try to drive you

into the ground. That should piss you off. Plain and simple, there is an object in front of you that is trying to defeat and bring you down. Anger about that very fact is often the very solution to overcoming that enemy. Now sometimes, there are things that we can draw on from deep inside of us as well, perhaps something from the past. Whatever it is you might think about strongman can be a good outlet for those thoughts. I know that I have one particular thought in my head that from time to time I can go to and it has not failed me. If you have a thought like that you can utilize it as well. Some people are very emotionally charged about the psyche up process and some are very introverted and keep it inside. For instance Zydrunas Savickas goes about his lifting very calmly and quietly, but still gets the job done. Others prefer slaps and lots of yelling, either way is good, as long as it works for you.

## REALIZE THE POWER OF THE WHOLE BODY

One of the techniques I have often used with great success is to realize the power of the body as a whole. What I mean is that we often think in terms of separate body parts when we do a lift. For example, when you do an overhead press you might think of shoulders as the primary muscle lifting the weight. If you change your thinking however, and think about utilizing every muscle group in your body, it can work wonders for your strength. Imagine if you utilized the strength of every muscle group of your body all at once. How much weight could you really lift? Now I am aware of the fact that there are certain muscle groups that are dominant on certain lifts. The goal however, is to try and activate your entire bodies energy and strength as a whole to lift the weight. So when you do that overhead press you aren't just using some leg and shoulder strength, but every muscle to lift the weight. That means calves, hamstrings, biceps, shoulders, triceps, traps, abs, back, everything! If you try to make a physiological counterpoint to this about which muscle groups are involved in certain lifts, you are completely missing the point. The point is if you think in terms of how strong your whole body is when every muscle fires at the same time, 2, 3, or 400 pounds overhead begins to seem like light weight. Try this psychological "trick" out and see if the weight doesn't seem lighter.

## OVERCOMING PAIN

Here is a fact: You will experience pain in strongman. A true strongman may have a certain amount of enjoyment for pain, but at times it is necessary to block it out.

There are certain techniques that can be done to accomplish this. One thing you can do is realize what pain is. Pain is simply a message sent to the brain that some type of trauma or stress is going on with the body. Therefore, if you could turn off that signal there would be no more pain. Now this takes some practice. In training or life in general when you are going through pain you can acknowledge the signal the body is trying to send and then once it is received, turn the signal off. It isn't needed anymore because you got the message. This may or may not make sense to you but try it out and see if you are able to turn off the signal. Of course there is a less scientific approach and it involves motivation. If someone is motivated enough no amount of pain will stop you. Case in point, if something terrible is happening to a loved one. In order for you to save them, you would have to do something that caused a lot of pain. Because you had the proper motivation you would go through it without a moments pause wouldn't you? The same principle applies in strongman. If you are motivated enough to strive for excellence, refuse to be a quitter, and become the champion you want to be, no amount of pain will stop you. Ask yourself where your motivation and conviction levels are.

## SOMETIMES LESS PSYCHE IS MORE

There are however, certain times when too much psyching up is detrimental, for instance a medley. During a grueling medley your heart rate will go through the roof and you will be oxygen deprived. Now if your heart rate is already very high before the medley starts it will get way to high during the event, and you will gas out way to soon.

I have had a problem with this in the past. Before a medley I would start anticipating what I was about to go through and the anxiety of the event would cause my heart rate to go too high. I have learned to calm myself down and bring my heart rate

back down to a reasonable rate. Do your best before events that are very stressful on the heart to calm yourself down, or you might not perform at your optimal level during the event. Here it's not always beneficial to work yourself up with too much adrenaline.

## YOU ARE YOUR BIGGEST COMPETITION

At the end of the day, always remember that you are your biggest competition. I am a very competitive person, but I have realized that I enjoy competing against myself the most. Ultimately other athletes will do what they are going to do in a competition and you will do what you do. Don't go through strongman without taking some time to realize that there is more to the sport than just lifting stuff. As fun as that is, there are life lessons and real world applications that can be learned from training and competing. Begin to realize that if you can use the power of the mind to move weights that previously seemed impossible, then you can use the same mind to accomplish other things in life. If you can push through a medley even though you feel like you will die if you go one step further, what else can you go through in life? What can you go through and come out on the other side and say I believed I could do it and I did? I believe this is the ultimate goal of the strongman journey, and I hope these tips can help you in not only strongman, but life as well.

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[jthigpeninc@gmail.com](mailto:jthigpeninc@gmail.com)