



Armlifting USA Newsletter

Volume 3

February 1, 2020

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by **Riccardo Magni**

Welcome to the Volume 3 of our newsletter. This will be another perk of membership. We will email you interviews, contest recaps, and training ideas featuring you: our members!!

We will include member content as well. Is there a lifter that you want to see featured? A contest that you wish you went to? Let me know and we will do what we can to make it happen.

POWER Picture of the Month



Featured Athlete: Poha Henson lifts a massive 60kg (132#) on the Rolling Thunder at the All-American Armlifting Championships in Los Angeles.

Contest Spotlight:

All-American Armlifting: Los Angeles

Massive lifts were made by the Armlifters in Los Angeles on January 25-26, 2020. An international field was headlined by Carl Myercough, Alexey Tyukalov, and Aleksandr Filimonov. Sadie Kromholtz, Poha Henson, and Sardana Osipova led the women's group, all hitting PR's in at least one event. Full results can be found on <https://armliftingusa.com/contest-results>

These FIT EXPO contests are very high energy venues with lots of people. If you have never experienced one before, put it on your calendar for next year!!

Featured below: Armlifting USA member Carl Myercough lifts 115kg (253#) in the Rolling Thunder World Championships that took place in Los Angeles on Saturday January 25.



#LAFITEXPO

5 Questions with Tanner Merkle



1. What is/are your favorite lifts to train?

I love all thickbar events and wide pinch. Thick handle dumbbells are a personal favorite. My climbing background has given me a fair amount of strength in the open hand position.

2. Why do you compete in Armlifting?

I found armlifting after a knee injury from rock climbing left me couch-bound for a few months. I needed a way to strengthen my hands, armlifting seemed like an effective way to do that while I was unable to climb. I have continued to pursue the sport because I love grip training and enjoy meeting like minded people in our close-knit community.

3. What are your goals for 2020?

In 2020, I hope to deadlift 200kg on the axle. As a rock climber, I have almost no weight training experience and I have found it very difficult to progress on lifts that demand lots of full body strength. In addition to my axle, I would like to lift the Millennium Dumbbell if I have a chance to try it.

4. What lifters do you think are ones to watch for 2020?

In 2020, I expect David Shamey and Carl Myerscough to certify or greatly improve upon their CoC 4 closes...I expect them to certify soon. I anticipate Andreas Brixa to have a huge axle deadlift pull and maybe even the WR. Jesse Pynnönen has continued to assert himself as a top force in the grip world. I bet he will win the International King Kong of Grip Challenge next year. Sarah Chappelow won King Kong for the Women and I feel confident in predicting she will be dominant in all grip competitions she chooses to attend.

5. What did it mean to you to compete for Team USA at the APL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS in Russia in 2019?

In 2019, I got to compete at the APL World Championship in Russia. It was an honor to be a part of Team USA. I got the privilege of hearing the USA national anthem play when I won gold for the Rolling Thunder event. That is an honor that few athletes can say they have had. It meant so much to me.

5 Questions with Christina Petit



1. What is your favorite lift to train?

I love to train with the Blockbuster Pinch Block.

2. Why do you compete in Armlifting?

It is a fun way to do what I love without putting too much strain on my body. I love that it is something Josh and I can do together and I love meeting new people at competitions!

3. What are your feelings about competing in the 2020 Arnold Classic Armlifting Championships?

I am a bit nervous to compete at the Arnold Classic Armlifting Championships because I have never competed in such a big competition. I am so thankful to be given the opportunity to meet some people in the grip world and I hope to do the very best that I can in competition!

4. What lifters do you think are ones to watch for 2020?

I have known Sarah Chappelow since her very first competition at Renewed Strength in Eldersburg, Maryland. Her commitment to grip training is inspiring and I love the humility she always has even as she takes over the Leaderboards! She is a good friend of mine and it is all because of Armlifting.

5. What are your goals for 2020?

My goals for 2020 are to continue to work towards my grip training so that I can be prepared for the Arnold!

5 Questions with Bill Weiss



1. What is/are your favorite lifts to train?

I like the Excalibur and Saxon bar. Excalibur just fits in my hand well. The Saxon bar is so challenging and unique. It always draws interest from gym members.

2. Why do you compete in Armlifting?

I am a partner in a gym with Odd Haugen and he suggested/bullied me into it. If Odd says to do it around the gym, it is best to listen.

3. What are your goals for 2020?

I would like to increase my overall strength and continue to meet more of the amazing armlifting athletes from all over the world.

4. What lifters do you think are ones to watch for 2020?

So many and I am more familiar with California lifters. Odd Haugen will be 70 in January and I look for him to continue to set records. Carl Myerscough is getting better each time I see him. Sardana Osipova is a new armlifter who will do big things in 2020.

**5. What did it mean to you to compete for Team USA at the APL
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS in Russia in 2019?**

I was humbled and honored to be invited to compete with the best in the world. I had chills when our National Anthem was played after the first two events. I found out that the armlifting community expands beyond borders and they are a fantastic group of men and women.

5 Questions with Lorna Paton



1) What is/are your favourite lifts to train?

So, potentially controversially, I don't specifically train grip very much! I rely very heavily on the carry over from the strength I've built competing in strongman for the last few years.

That said, deadlifts are my most favourite thing. We have a decidedly love/hate relationship, but sooner or later they always come good again. Given my strongman background I have historically almost exclusively deadlifted with straps to save my grip for farmers walks, so armlifting has added another dimension of challenge to my favourite lift simply by taking away my beloved figure-8's! I'm also becoming quite fond of silver bullet, despite how badly it hurts. Moving up to the next CoC always feels like a special occasion.

2) Why do you compete in Armlifting?

My first competition was King Kong in 2017. I went along with my friend Jenn Tibbenham just to make up the numbers at the London venue, which was at risk of being cancelled. Jenn told me what to do as we went along, and without any idea what my attempts should've been I placed 2nd overall in the women's category. Three years later, I have two silver medals and a giant gorilla statue on my shelf, so you could say grip has been very kind to me so far! All credit to Jenn for being an amazing teacher, plus bountiful offerings to the gods of newbie gainz.

The technical side of the sport really appeals to me, as does the still baffling range of lifts and equipment. Plus I greatly appreciate a geeky conversation about chalking technique and appropriate use of a towel.

3) What are your goals for 2020?

I actually haven't set any specific goals for the year; or at least not ones that are metrics based. In recent years as my lifting career progressed I had become increasingly prone to comparing myself with others and feeling that my achievements were somehow completely inadequate. Needless to say this resulted in a very negative frame of mind and high stress levels heading into competitions. Obviously we ultimately are competing against each other, but this is a hobby and it's supposed to be fun!

Last year I finally started listening to what my coach has been telling me all along, and consciously began to focus more on the process and my own progress. Weirdly, it turns out that's a good recipe for happiness and for great results! I don't think I would've had the guts to compete at World's Strongest Woman last year if I'd still been talking myself

down at every possible opportunity. This year I'll keep working on that. As long I'm enjoying my training, proud of the effort I'm putting in, and getting to compete at cool events, this year will be a success whatever numbers I hit or trophies I bring home.

That said, I have my first ever powerlifting meet in February, fingers crossed there might be a plane pull, and I want my King Kong title back! Oh, and I bought a CoC #3 after the Arnold last year, so I'm going to try my best to hit that on stage in March.

4) What lifters do you think are ones to watch for 2020?

If I had to pick an individual, then on the women's side it has to be Sarah Chappelow. Her numbers at King Kong last year were astonishing, and it's clear from her recent training videos that she's continuing to progress in leaps and bounds. I'm excited to see what she does at the Arnold.

I don't think we have much idea yet what women are capable of in this sport. As the level of participation and depth of talent increases all the existing records are going to fall, and lifts considered special today will become the new normal. There's a hyper-competitive little community building on social media now with the likes of Sarah, Elizabeth Horne, Hilde Holtebu, Patricia Luxner, Mervi Pekki and Jenn Tibbenham all regularly exceeding each others' best lifts and pushing the standard forward. Hopefully I can do my part and stay somewhere in that mix.

On the men's side, Jerome Bloom in the UK is one of my favourite lifters, not only because he's phenomenally strong, but for his work ethic and determination. He is absolutely relentless in his pursuit of progress and his focus on competition day is next level. We could all stand to be a little more Jerome in our approach to training.

5) What did it mean to you to win the First Arnold Classic Armlifting Championships in 2019?

It still doesn't feel entirely real. Competing in the rarefied air of the Arnold is a bucket list item for most strength athletes, whatever their sport, so it was a privilege just to be invited to participate. I went into it incredibly nervous and feeling very under prepared, as it was only my third ever grip competition, I only had 7 weeks notice, and I had never touched an Ironmind Apollon's axle until warm ups, during which I found out it was very different to the axle I'd been training on!

The other athletes were unfailingly supportive and friendly, but first and foremost were all fierce competitors, and collectively very determined to show that Armlifting is a sport that deserves to be showcased at that level. To win in that environment was beyond anything I could have hoped for. The field this year looks even more formidable, and the women are definitely going to bring some fire on Day 1 when we take centre stage.

5 Questions with Dali Zheng



1. What is/are your favorite lifts to train?

My favorite lift to train is whatever lift I just invented and am trying out for the first time. Second favorite would be trying out a new lift that one of my grip friends has invented. I don't wish to be a specialist who excels at just one or two types of lifts. Rather, I'd like to have a good, well-rounded grip. For me, having a wide variety of exercises is of the utmost importance. I have never done the same grip workout twice!

2. Why do you compete in armlifting?

The tremendous camaraderie! I participate in armlifting contests to lift alongside other folks who love the gripsports every bit as much as I do. Plus, I hope to glean some additional motivation and inspiration to light new fires under my training (post-contest). My view: we all share the stage, spotlight, etc., but I only try to beat, best, outperform myself.

3. What are your goals for 2020?

No goals for 2020. I have been training grip since the mid-1990s. One thing I have learned is that the *rate* at which grip strength gains occur is wildly unpredictable (i.e., compared to other strength sports such as powerlifting). And so, I don't set short-term goals. I do have a long list of lifetime goals and work hard every day to check more and more items off of that list. Of course, I'm always adding new items to the lifetime goals list as well! Some examples include: 600 lb. Farmer's Handle or Hexbar Deadlift with either the blue or orange Fat Gripz; 300 lb. 3" Axle Deadlift; O.K. Pinch (thumb and index finger only) of a 45 lb. plate by the hub; Air Transfer of a 45 lb. plate by the hub; One-Hand Pinch all of the following: four 10 kg. competition plates, two York 45s, and three York 25s; Facelift Clean and Press a 65 lb. iron hex dumbbell; Lift the Inch; Close the #3.

4. What lifters do you think are ones to watch for 2020?

Currently, I follow over 900 grip enthusiasts on Instagram; and so, this is a VERY DIFFICULT question to answer! Perhaps, I'll just name the first dozen or so well-rounded gripsters I think of (excluding Armlifting USA management). Nikita Yurkovets, Carl Myerscough, Marja Laari, Timo Janne, Arto Joronen, Tomi Tuomi, Patricia Luxner, Thomas Larsen, Jerome Bloom, Sarah Chappellow, Ivan Kriviykh, and Jason Dingey.

5. What did it mean to you to compete for Team USA at the APL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS in Russia in 2019?

Helping to represent the U.S. in international grip competitions (APL Worlds in 2018 and 2019; Bonehill in 2019) has been the greatest honor and biggest thrill of my 35+ year lifting career. Getting to meet, spend time with, and lift grip alongside armlifting friends from around the world has been a dream come true. And I am so grateful to Armlifting U.S.A. for all they have done and continue to do for our sport. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

TRAINING CORNER

By Adam Glass and Riccardo Magni

Training and winning - the equipment that will help you get there!

AG: Your success on the Armlifting platform will be proportionate to the time invested in the gym before the meet. It's key to understand that ours is primarily a sport of preparation.

I want to help you get ahead faster. The first thing that can be done to speed you up is to equip you for proper training.

RM: Let's go over 3 pieces of equipment that can really help you improve your armlifting results.

AG: Exactly! The more specifically you can practice the event, the better you will do.

#1 a Silver Bullet

AG: Having the specific strap from Ironmind will be a huge help in your training. The skill of how you load your attempt makes or breaks your shot. To do your best at your meet, get a bullet and learn to use it.

RM: Another benefit to improving gripper training is to have a variety of grippers to practice with. This breaks up the monotony of training and can give you some really good goals to shoot for. Setting PR's on grippers in training is a really good way to measure progress in the Silver Bullet.

#2 a Sorinex 3" x 4" Saxon bar

AG: Training on the same texture and thickness as the competition bar will greatly improve your performance. A great Saxon lift is not just a thumb exercise but also wrist, arm, shoulder, back. It feels very different than a vertical plate loading top pinch set up.

RM: Too many people get surprised by the sheer size of the Saxon Bar (if they don't own one and just show up at a meet). It is not small. And for some people, pinching while deadlifting is not a natural motion.

#3 Good locking collars

AG: There is a large change when the plates are locked in tightly to the Axle & Saxon Bar compared to lifting without locking collars. It will be very productive to lift with the plates tight. Overcoming the rotation will hugely benefit your hand strength.

RM: I have seen the collars throw off world class lifters. They make that much of a difference. I use the Ivanko collars. These are calibrated and are bulletproof. They will last a lifetime. Definitely a good investment, in my opinion.

AG: My advice for every lifter is work with what you have now. Add more equipment when it makes sense. As your goals increase, get yourself the right tools to reach them.

RM: If you have training partners, it makes sense to split up the cost of the equipment. Sharing the costs certainly can take the sting out of new equipment purchases. And don't be afraid to ask the owner of your gym to buy some gear. Who knows, he or she may like Armlifting and maybe even host a contest?? It can never hurt to ask.

Upcoming contests

We need more people to hold contests. It is not hard at all. All you need is the equipment and a few friends. It could be as simple as "The Anytown Rolling Thunder Championships".

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

Have more questions or want to contribute to the next issue?

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