

Profile

Andrew Cominos

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I am 57 years old, and a gym owner now based in Cornwall. Married with three grown-up children (all of whom train with weights, as does my wife, even though she isn't that keen!) I started in the strength sports in 1959 as a 14 year old skinny kid of 7st 10lbs. My first gym was in Ramsgate, Kent - under the watchful eye of Coach Frank DeConinck. We were encouraged to do all forms of lifting - weightlifting, powerlifting, single arm lifts and "odd lifts" like curls, single arm presses etc.

What are your best lifts?

Standing Press 108kgs, Two Hands Snatch 97.5kgs, Two Hands Clean and Jerk 145kgs, Dead Lift 230kgs, Front Squat 165kgs, Right Hand Press 50kgs, Right Hand Swing 70kgs. All these were done as a junior lifter at between 68-70kgs bodyweight. My bench press was and still is rubbish.

What titles do you hold or have held?

Over 20 country and divisional titles between 1962 and 1978, in both, Kent, Sussex and SE Champs, when in the BAWLA. SW champion in the BAWG in 1986. Mainly in WL, but one or two later also in powerlifting. British Junior 67.5 WL Champion in 1965.

What training style do you train?

At present, time and commitments make it difficult for me to follow any but a basic routine. I now use a simple "split" system on 3 days a week, with a few "Olympic" movements thrown in once again to restore some core strength to my ageing body! I am also trying to vary my exercises and workloads more than I did before, and keeping my reps fairly low to save energy and lessen the likelihood of aggravating old injuries.

How long have you been powerlifting?

I am in my 44th year in this magnificent, crazy game. My involvement exclusively in powerlifting began in 1989, when the BPA (now BDFPA) was formed.

How important are training partners to you?

Not immensely, as I have had to be self-motivated for many years for various reasons. However, I prefer to train with other people for the atmosphere and encouragement, and obviously I like to have reliable spotters when doing heavy squats, for example.

What made you become a powerlifter?

What made me first join the gym in 1959 was reading old copies of "Health & Strength" magazine that my brother bought. Funnily enough, he never took up training himself, but it has been a major part of my own life from then till now. My greatest inspiration was Paul Anderson. Great lifter and a great human being. The strongest man who ever lived. I don't think we will see his like again in a hurry.

What is your favorite assistance exercise?

Bar dips. On a good day I can still do those with 40-50kg. hanging from my waist. Seated Cable Row is another favourite, and I am also enjoying partial squats and bench presses (lockouts), and finding them useful.

What is the biggest mistakes that beginners make?

Over-training/failing to get really sound dead lifting technique/not warming up enough. All three can lead to injuries, and the first can lead to staleness as well, sometimes lasting for years.

What is your advice for beginners?

Learn to "cycle" your training properly. Get advice on top-notch technique on all lifts (especially dead lifting), and warm-up properly. Vary your exercises from time to time, and don't be afraid to take time off occasionally. Train at whatever rate works best for you (don't always try to keep up with training partners or others in the gym). When training for a competition, avoid "burn-out" by not leaving your best poundages in the gym. Save them for the big day.

What are some of your most memorable powerlifting experiences?

Spotting for 30 stone Mark Henry, when he broke the WDFPF World Record squat at the Worlds in Horsham in 1995. The lift was 432.5! As a very powerful teenager, being beaten by an OAP from Brighton called Ernie Trory, because I went out immediately before lifting, for a huge slap-up Chinese meal. Came back bloated and couldn't lift anything. Certainly cut me down to size! More recently, being at the first-ever WDFPF Worlds in 1988 - a great milestone which was like a dream realised.

What is the craziest thing you ever seen in powerlifting?

A 52 kg lifter from the USA - at the 1995 Horsham Worlds - who was running the risk of getting timed out when taking a long time to wrap up for the squat. His coach, seeing that the lifter might be counted out (walking with the wraps on was a bit laborious), picked the wrapped-up lifter up bodily, and ran at speed with him to the platform, where he deposited the lifter at his bar just in time to take the attempt.

What are your future goals?

To get rid of some of my long-standing injuries and tendonitis so that I can make a bit of progress and have another go on the competitive platform. If I could notch up a 500 total at M4 or M5 (82.5s) - I would be happy with that.

What do you think is the most important factor when it comes to upping your lifts?

Shocking the system and bringing variety into training, so that it remains as enjoyable as it can be. Also eating and sleeping well.

Do you think powerlifting should become an Olympic sport?

Definitely NOT. People are sometimes puzzled when I say this - but here's why: Drugs have been rife in the Olympics since 1972 and in WL and PL even earlier. The Olympics became commercialised in 1984, since then the financial rewards have skyrocketed. The

stakes are immensely high now. This means that there are greater incentives than ever before to cheat to win - and greater incentives than ever before, NOT to get caught! Result - more drug use than ever, but better concealed than ever. It gives me no pleasure to say it - but I believe the Olympic movement, like mainstream sport in general, is rotten to the core with drug abuse, and with efforts to subvert the testing process. It is poisonous, and any new sport which becomes involved with it - is bound to get poisoned as well.

How do you see the future of powerlifting?

Actually, I am more interested in the future of DRUG-FREE powerlifting. We need to keep the faith, and not fall for the old line that other bodies are now also trying their best to be drug-free. If this were true there would be no point in the continued existence of the BDFPA and WDFPF. We could just wind up our operations, amalgamate with the mainstream PL bodies, and all be one big, happy family. Nice idea, but it ain't going to happen. There is just as much need for the drug-free organisations now as there was in the 1980s, when they were first established. Regrettable, but true. I think we can make real progress if everyone works on the principle that 'drug-free lifters belong in a drug-free organisation'. In other words, it isn't enough to support the ideal of drug-free lifting. We all need to work for the success of those drug-free organisations which were created to bring this about.

What does your diet consist of?

That's an embarrassing question. I eat too much of everything, and drink too much alcohol.

What makes the difference between an average lifter and a champion?

Genetics, obviously - but also self-belief, and the ability to overcome setbacks. I have seen some hugely talented people get nowhere because they had their confidence hammered by a bad meet, and I have also seen some modestly-built individuals rise to great heights because they had the right mental attitude. Being prepared to learn from others also helps.

What training style do you think works best?

As above - varied intensity/ varied exercises/avoid staleness and boredom. Try out new things from time to time.

Do you think bodybuilding exercises should be in a powerlifters routine?

It depends on what you consider a bodybuilder's exercise. Dips, seated cable rows and shoulder press are useful, as are shrugs with a Gerard trap bar. But things like lateral raises, concentration curls etc., are probably of very little value when it comes to building real "core" strength. Speciality exercises like partial lifts, hyperextension and reverse hypens, good mornings, various grip strengtheners, are more useful.

What are your favorite supplements?

Having tried almost every kind of supplement during the 25 years I was a full-time competitive lifter, I am not a great fan. I tend to the old-fashioned idea that a healthy

lifestyle, adequate sleep, good food and intelligent training methods are the best approach. In my experience many people in gyms who spend a fortune on supplements do this because they train unwisely or don't know how to eat properly, and can't understand why they don't make progress. I am very wary of any lifter being "as good as the supplements they take". That said, I am a strong supporter of both mussel extract and Glucosamine. Mussel has rescued my "wrecked" knee joints on 3 occasions during the past 20 years. The benefits on osteo-arthritis are also well-known, though I'm not a sufferer. I also take huge quantities of Vitamin C if I'm run-down or fighting off a cold.

What has powerlifting taught you?

The value of strength training. It's not just a matter of trophies and titles. Being strong and in good shape makes you better able to cope with the rigours of daily life. It keeps you young, gives vitality and a quality of life not usually available to non-trainers. Whenever I look around and see the state some other 60 year olds are in - I thank my lucky stars that I discovered the world of strength all those years ago. I also enjoy being around powerlifters, particularly the drug-free variety. I never cease being impressed with their levels of focus, dedication, patience, and plain "oomph" - even if it is sometimes accompanied by a hint of bloody-mindedness! These are great people.

What does powerlifting mean to you?

A good deal - it means health and strength; an absorbing hobby of 44 years; friends; and even in part some of my professional work. It is for those reasons that I support the drug-free lifting organisations so strongly. What we have is something of real quality, something in which we can all take pride - even if it sometimes feels like hard work swimming upstream!

Thanks Andrew!!!!