



Content copyright protected and provided for personal use only - not for reproduction or retransmission.
For reprints, please contact the Publisher.

MALIEK DERSTINE

You Get What You Give

BY JOHN GREAVES III

In Marvel Comics, the mutant Wolverine is 5'3" tall and weighs about 195 lbs., minus the adamantium. Enemies frequently underestimate his power because of his stature. Maliek Derstine is 5'3" and weighs about 195 lbs. between meets, but his fellow competitors at 181 lbs. have learned not to underestimate him due to his size. At twenty-seven years old, Maliek has already been competing for a solid ten years in powerlifting, and has been breaking records at every meet. He set four new All Time Total World Records in 2015. First, he did so with a 10x bodyweight total of 1950 lbs. raw with knee wraps at the IPL Worlds in September of 2015. Then, he totaled 1901 lbs. raw without knee wraps at the USPA American Cup during the LA Fit Expo. In March, in the renowned Animal Cage, he squatted 780 lbs. to best World Record squatter, Tom Kallas, in exhibition. I was able to drag him out of bed the next morning, hoping to find out more about his training and the secret to his incredible lifts.

You're about 5'3 tall, and you usually weigh 180 lbs. Now, you float at about 195 lbs. When you were staying at 180 lbs., was that part of a conscious decision to stay at the top of the 181 lbs. class, or did you just not feel a need to cut down to 165 lbs.?

I decided that I wanted to grow into the 181 lbs. class and not cut the weight. In the two hour weigh-ins, I was constantly weighing in around 174 lbs. while competing in the 165 lbs./75kg and 163 lb./74kg class. It was in 2013 that I noticed diminishing returns of performance in that weight division. I let my body grow into the next class; initially, I hovered around 180-185 lbs. I'm currently about 195 lbs. and cutting to 181 lbs. I casually grew up into that [weight class]. I take my time cutting back down to the class.

You're at the point where you're already the number one in the world. Do you feel that you're

still adding strength because of increased neural capacity and just getting more and more efficient at lifting the weight? Or, now that you are putting on weight, do you feel that you're also adding muscle?

I think it's a good combination of the two. When I was younger, whenever I would go up a class, I noticed it'd be about twenty-four to thirty-six months before I'd hit my stride in that class. I'm just now at the twenty-four month mark of truly being an '81 and maxing out the class. So, I think that what I'm seeing now is more of a neural capability as opposed to the size increase from going to a '65 to a full-blown '81. What you're seeing now is where the true potential is - it's slowly progressing to where it can truly be.

Okay...your squat improved as your trunk got bigger. Was packing mass onto your abs and obliques a specific goal?

I think when you examine the musculature traits of a powerlifter,

you will find that the thoracic region of the body will ultimately become more pronounced. This could both be intentional or unintentional in nature. In the act of squatting and deadlifting, the abdominal region is paramount in stability. If an athlete only performs squats and/or deadlifts, the ability to generate maximum stability (aka. maximum contraction via maximum motor unit recruitment) will be non-existent. In theory, this will create an imbalance that will present itself upon maximum barbell loadings at some point in time. Understanding abdominal/ thoracic form and function is imperative when trying to stabilize maximum barbell loads and must be trained accordingly. The thoracic region also includes musculature of the low back, if one is trying to use this as a reference. In

regards to myself exclusively, my thoracic region is specifically trained in the aforementioned area. As a rule of thumb, an athlete needs to address time under tension/contraction in accordance to diaphragm pressure and abdominal function. The transverse/ rectus abdominus need to be exclusively targeted, as well as the obliques, in order to precisely train the thoracic region to endure maximum loadings. In my opinion, a stronger thoracic region is the lifeline in preventing spinal injury.

So, give me an example of a "go to" exercise for your thoracic region, and when you like to do it.

Standing banded crunches for sets to failure every day.

What about obliques and low back?

Russian side bends on the GHR [Glute Ham Raise]. Also, low back reverse hypers twice a week. The reps will vary since it is best to do sets to failure. I do something for my core every day.

Just the way you're explaining things now sounds pretty methodical. "I'm here to work; I'm just going to work." I saw how focused you were yesterday when you were getting ready to squat in The Animal Cage. So, what's going through your mind before, during and after a big lift?

What you saw is what it is all of the time. I'm kind of focused, but I'm not too amped up. You don't want to get too crazy, you just want to be focused in order to hit the task. In a squat, all I've got to do is go down and come back up. So, if you approach it the same way every single time then the result should be the same way every single time. During the lift, you're making sure you're pushing on your belt, keeping your abdomen tight, and sitting back on your heels as you go down. You're also ensuring that your chest and trunk are staying vertical, and that when you actually get into the hole, in the squat for instance, that you're maintaining your posture. Then, you stand back up.



What cues do you use for benching? Do you like to pull the bar apart/bend the bar?

I like to try to set my shoulder blades down and into the bench as hard as possible. It's almost like a reverse slingshot - so, pull with your lats, and push with your arms and chest. In USPA, you can bench with your heels up. I'm a heels flat bencher - I'm never going to change that. I keep my head down. So, pretty much, I haven't really changed my technique on bench at all. It's a methodical approach - do the same thing every time, and then the results should be nearly the same every time.

Speaking of technique, you compete successfully in both gear and raw which has to require certain technical adjustments. How do you decide whether you're going to compete raw or equipped at a particular meet? Do you have a set number of times a year that you like

**IBE
FLEX
IN**

**PREMIUM FITNESS
AND LIFESTYLE
APPAREL**

 @lbelexin_Apparel  lbelexin Apparel

WWW.IBEFLEXIN.COM



to compete in both?

When I got out of the IPF, my intentions were to lift in both. Last year, I did a raw meet back in Chicago. In my first USPA event, I hit 1818 lbs. The only reason I did that was because I saw the record and I was like, "I think I can go ten times bodyweight" since I was already near ten times bodyweight with my training numbers. I just never put them [the numbers] on the board in a meet. So, I trained in order to make sure that I knew I could hit what I wanted to hit, and I planned accordingly. I went down to Steve Goggins' meet, the Georgia State Meet, as a guest lifter last June in hopes of totaling 1900 lbs./862.5kg. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful. That contest taught me a lot as an athlete. I left there thinking, "If I just train a little bit more; 1900, 1950, maybe 2000 could possibly be there raw." I will continue to compete raw until I'm at the point where I feel the need to put equipment back on. I'm not against either; it's just not where I'm focused right now. There are some numerical goals I want

- IMPROVED RESULTS
 - STRESS REDUCTION
 - NO SHOULDER PAIN
 - MINIMIZE INJURY
- (Pick any four.)



Duffalo High Performance Squat and Bench Bar™ Designed by world record holder, Chris Duffin, with the belief that there has to be a better, safer way to train. The Duffalo Bar will increase the longevity of athletic careers. By allowing scapular retraction, improved joint centration and reducing stress on the easily irritated bicep tendon, the Duffalo Bar preserves long term shoulder health. For order information including instructional videos visit our online store at KabukiStrength.net.

KABUKI STRENGTH



to hit in each respective division.

You discovered powerlifting through football, right? What other sports are in your athletic background?

Track and field. I was a sprinter - they tried to get me to throw, but I just wasn't really interested. I didn't want to throw shot. I dabbled with wrestling a little bit, and it was boring, so I just went back into the gym to lift weights. I also played football. At the time, powerlifting was always a priority. That was right around thirteen years old, and I stuck with it. One of the things I liked about powerlifting is that it is the only sport where you really get out of it what you put into it. I unequivocally tell people this all the time. In other sports like football - let's say you're a running back; you're dependent on your offensive line, your quarterback, and your receivers. You could be the best athlete, and no one would ever know it. Same thing with running relays in track and field, or even wrestling. It is an individual sport - you could run the fastest split, or get a number of pins and wins, but if you're the only good man/woman on your team, your team could suck, and no one's going to know your name. In powerlifting, there's always more to do as long as you keep on putting the work in. So, every time you get better, that's what you do - you just work a little harder and get better. That's what kind of kept me motivated. I would tell myself I can do more.

What are some of your best gym and competition numbers?

COMPETITION LIFTS

Squat 716 lbs. sleeves/749 lbs. in wraps

Bench 523 lbs.

Deadlift 678 lbs.

Total 1901 lbs. sleeves/1951 lbs. wraps

GYM LIFTS

Squat 780 lbs.

Bench 530 lbs.

Deadlift 606 lbs. x 3

I'm going to quote you: "Many powerlifters will train daily. Many will quote various training methods and theories. But, how many will



tell you why they love powerlifting, or why it's important to them? Some are fueled by winning or by championship titles. Here's something to ponder when training: powerlifting has to be less about winning or losing; but moreover, [it's about] the personal journey one chooses to take. One has to be motivated by self-improvement,

"I'VE COME TO REALIZE THAT, AS AN ATHLETE, THE ONLY THING YOU CAN CONTROL IS PERSONAL PREPARATION AND INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE"

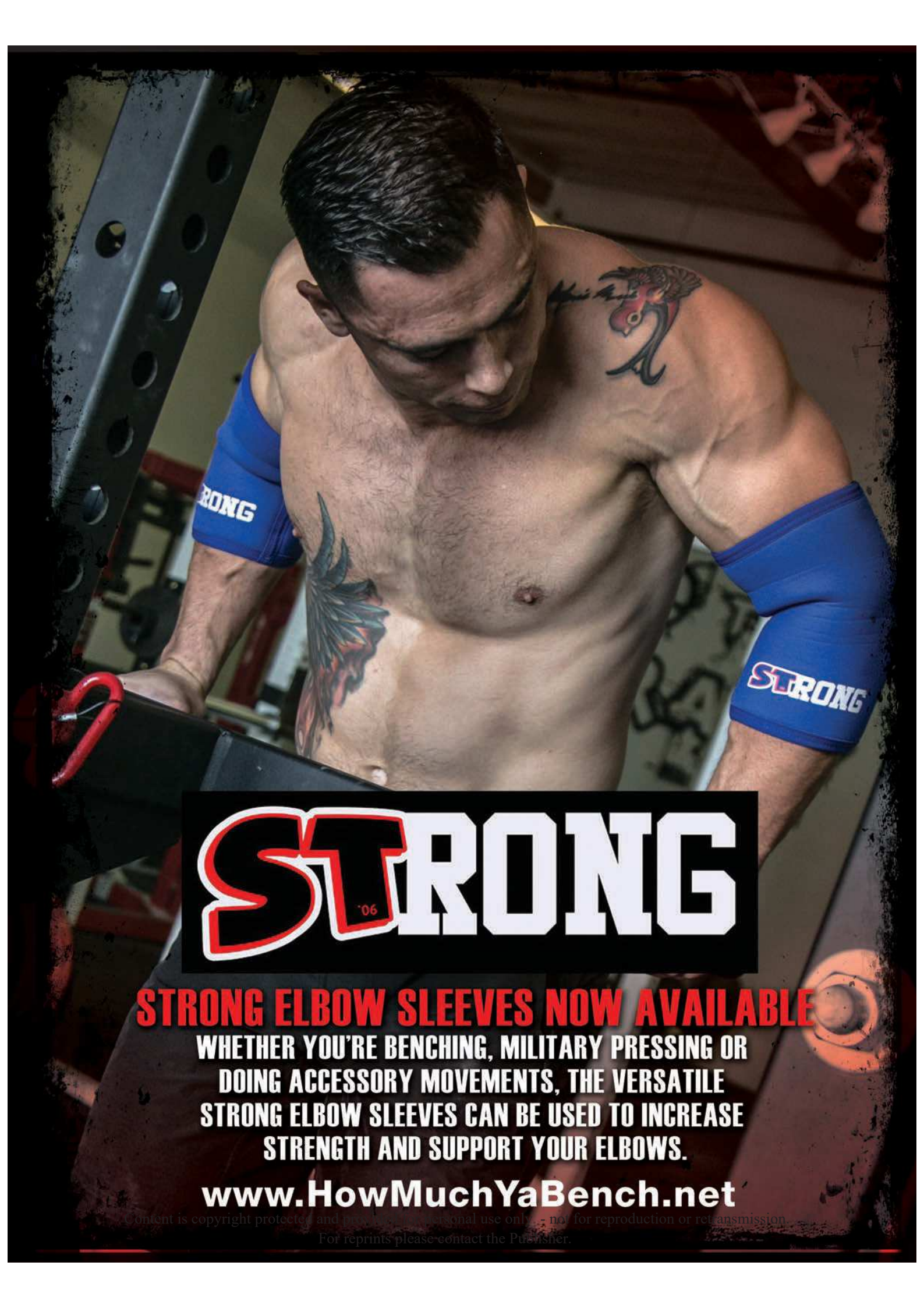
and [one has to] appreciate work and truly strive for improvement. Choose the venue, create a plan, and enjoy the journey. That is success." That's a very Eastern way of looking at this sport.

I think this is the current state of powerlifting. As I mature in the sport, my goals in powerlifting are personal

to myself and the few people I discuss them with. I've come to realize that, as an athlete, the only thing you can control is personal preparation and individual performance. I notice that people want to look at different people's achievements and say, "Yeah, they did that there, but they couldn't do that here. Or, they wore two and a half meter wraps instead of two meter wraps, or they didn't hold their press too long, or what have you."

Do you have a mental timeline for how long you want to compete in powerlifting, or do you plan to just compete for as long as you can?

I do have personal goals in regards to powerlifting as a whole. As far as a mental timeline, I feel it is impossible to transpose a duration of time to when a goal will be achieved. I believe that an athlete's success in powerlifting lies in their ability to display constant improvement until it is no longer feasible. One of the things I look at is Michael Soong's list, and that is what I think is the best historical measure of feats of strength in the weight classes over the last number of decades. So, if you really want to have a world record...you can say I lifted in



STRONG

STRONG ELBOW SLEEVES NOW AVAILABLE

**WHETHER YOU'RE BENCHING, MILITARY PRESSING OR
DOING ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS, THE VERSATILE
STRONG ELBOW SLEEVES CAN BE USED TO INCREASE
STRENGTH AND SUPPORT YOUR ELBOWS.**

www.HowMuchYaBench.net

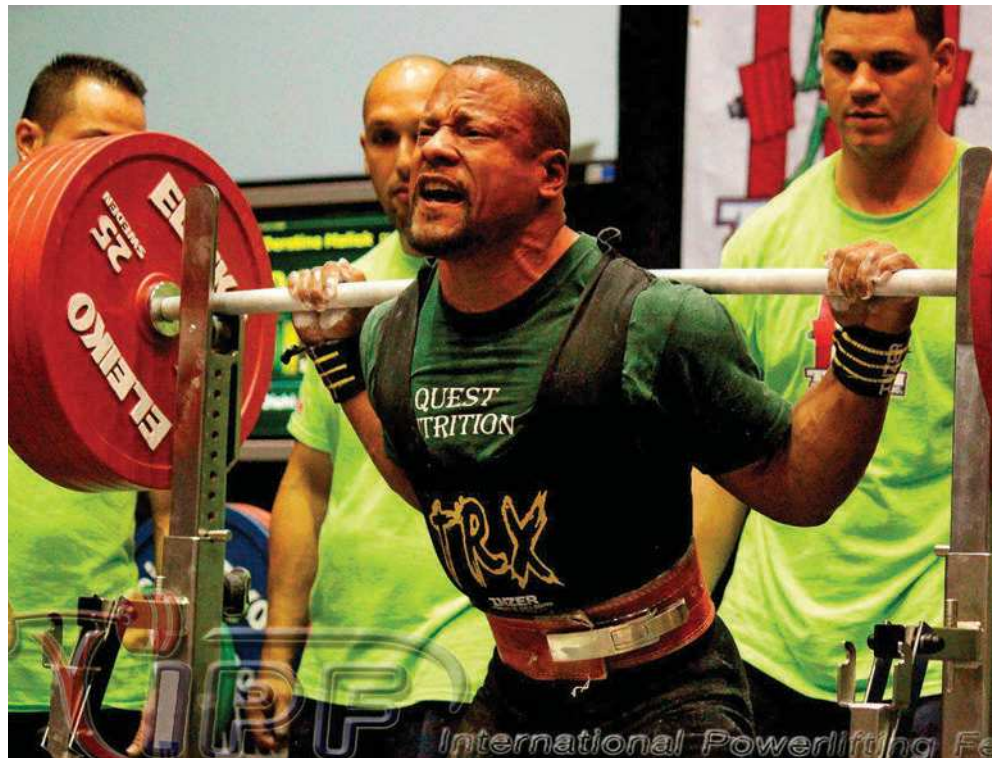
Content is copyright protected and provided for personal use only - not for reproduction or retransmission.
For reprints please contact the Publisher.

XYZ federation and got a world record, but where does that record put you on that list?

There are a few things that a lot of the greats of powerlifting possess - the most important of these being longevity. When you look at the likes of Steve Goggins, Gene Bell, Ed Coan, Tony Conyers, Lamar Gant, and Ausby Alexander - they displayed a high level of proficiency over an extensive period of time. On a side note, many do not realize that they had to beat world record holders, and in some instances, they had to beat multi-time world champions of their respective era in order to even reach the heights they are currently recognized for. As for me, I will continue to compete until it is no longer fun.

You've described your training philosophy as pulling a little bit from Eastern Bloc, Westside, and linear progression. You also said that you prefer to alternate submaximal and conditioning phases in four week blocks until you have a meet coming up. How did you arrive at this strategy?

So, I think submax training like the Sheiko system and other things like that, as well as periodization methods, work really good for equipped lifters because you're not really trying to tap out your true raw strength at all. You're basically going to have to transition to assistive equipment and the whole phase starts over again. What I started looking at, more from a strength athlete perspective, is if you take the best athletes, like Steve Goggins, Gene Bell, Eddie Coan, Lamar Gant, and Ausby - I could go on and on - if you look at the things that made them successful and take a piece from what every one of them did, you'll learn that they trained very similarly. So, what I was curious about was how would I apply that to myself? I started realizing that a lot of their methods were pretty simplistic, and they always had a plan. I think that competing raw helped me evolve my training immensely because I don't have the aid of assistive equipment, with the premise hinging on efficacy and efficiency. If you always stay in condition, you'll never be out of condition. If you always know where you're at, say at



a certain loading range, your training should be dependent on getting better in that range of loading. Your body is going to adapt quite noticeably. I write my training in three to five week macro blocks. The blocks vary in loading and intensity depending on whether I'm training for a meet or not. It'll be a little bit of submax [training] at certain times of the year, and then getting ready for meets, it'll be more of a maximal effort method. In between, it's kind of just transitioning all of the time. You can learn how to be efficient for yourself. The act of training should

"I'M REALLY BIG ON BODY RESTORATION AND HEALTH, OR ELSE I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TRAIN THE WAY I DO. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE"

always evolve because your strength curve is going to evolve. You're going to learn more, and as an athlete, you should come up with different ideas.

You seem to be constantly learning. You have a post on Instagram where you said you were reading

Yuri and Natalia Verkhoshansky's "Special Strength Training Manual for Coaches". What are some of your other favorite reads in strength training?

"The Science and Practice of Strength Training" by Vladimir M. Zatsiorsky and William J. Kraemer is another favorite of mine. I read through that in a week. I also have literature on Sheiko's earlier work that I know has been floating around for years. I read anything I can find really, but those two are definitely my favorite reads. In fact, I recommend that everyone read them.

Well, you work at an oncology unit in Buckingham, Pennsylvania...

I've been in the medical field since the age of eighteen years old, as an aide to dementia patients, a coach for adolescents on the side, and now as a nurse.

Working with cancer patients has to be stressful. Is lifting weights one way that you deal with the emotions from the job?

I don't really consider my job stressful. At an early age, I developed a passion for helping people in need. Helping and caring for people is something that I feel is important, whether it is something I get paid for or not.

What does a training week look like within your system? Do you have specific squat, bench and deadlift days, or do they change according to how you feel?

If you look at a monthly training plan, day one would be an accessory day, whether it be upper or lower [body], mostly non-barbell stuff. On day two, [I train] the opposing lower or upper split. This could be working the main pressing movement or the squat and pull movements. While on day three, [I do] the opposing upper or lower accessory split, and on day four, the other opposing main movement [is done], working the main pressing movement or the squat and pull movements.

Is there a day off in between those days?

If we're taking day one from Sunday, then Sunday would be day one, and Monday is day two. Tuesday would be an "off" day, and Wednesday would be day three. Thursday is also an "off" day. Friday would be the fourth day, and then Saturday would be another planned day of rest.

Let's talk about your "go to" squat assistance exercises. Last night, you went over to EliteFTS and did lower body accessories. What did you do?

I did leg press for five sets of twenty, single leg press for five sets of twenty, one legged squats for five sets of twenty, non-single leg curls, and extensions supersetted for sets of twenty. I also did single leg curls and extensions supersetted for sets of twenty and then some back extensions, again, sets of twenty. Accessory loading is typical while the exercise selection will vary based on need.

Since you claim that you don't have a healing factor, what do you like to do for recovery?

I'm really big on body restoration and health, or else I wouldn't be able to train the way I do. It would be impossible. I have two different chiropractors and a masseuse that I see on a bi-weekly schedule all year long. My masseuse performs myofascial, Graston work, and TRT, which also aid in my recovery.

Have you had any major injuries?

No, I've never had a major injury. I had a little bit of a glute issue a little while back in the off season which

I think was kind of a freak thing. It wasn't major; I think it was kind of a minor strain, but other than that, nothing severe at all. For which I'm very thankful . . .

And there's the healing factor I talked about! Case closed!

That's also why I write my training cycles the way I do. If your body is always prepared, you can hit a single whenever you want. Before squatting in The Cage, it might make it a little bit crazier when people find this out, but I didn't have a back squat of any significant weight. I did a set of five - off of 780 lbs., it might have been 65% [of my 1 rep max] - all of the other stuff was accessory work. So, I really just came in with 25 days' notice; I just went through my normal conditioning phase and I was like, "Let's see what I have". I did a seminar on this, and I learned that you should be able to be ready for a competition every five to six weeks. So, in one block of training, you could go hit some singles. **PM**

SWING MORE. LIFT MORE.

ShoudeRök™ Designed for strength athletes, coaches and practitioners. A precision, loadable tool, which when used correctly will increase strength and shoulder health, while continuously reinforcing the athlete's need for core stabilization. The ShoudeRök aids in reaching new PRs and most importantly, helps to keep us mobile and injury free for years to come. For order information including instructional videos visit our online store at KabukiStrength.net.

KABUKI STRENGTH