

JENNIFER MILLICAN

Weight Class – 57kg | 125lb

2017 IPF Raw World Champion & Overall Best Female Lifter

Current IPF Raw World Record Holder in Squat – 174.5 kg | 385 lb

Current IPF Raw World Record Holder in Total – 462 kg | 1019lb

Best Wilks to Date – 542.53

What an amazing introduction to USA Powerlifting it has been for you, Jennifer. From day one you have been making waves and it seems to me your future as a competitor has a ceiling as high as anyone we've seen before. Thank you for taking some time to talk with us at POWER Magazine.

JENNIFER: Thank you for having me! Grateful for such a cool opportunity.

You've mentioned to me that you played softball and basketball for most of your life. Where did your athletics all begin?

JENNIFER: I grew up in Mt. Juliet, TN (just outside of Nashville). Played in the local little leagues and schools there.

What were your biggest successes in your earlier athletic years? Do you feel they've contributed to your longer-term success in barbell sports?



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JENNIFER: I think the biggest contributing factor was the lack of fulfilling my potential in the early days of athletics. Of course, hindsight is 20/20, but I didn't take enough control of my own success to really achieve anything. I was cut from the softball team my sophomore year and, in that moment, I decided that I would never leave my own success to anyone other than myself. However, even in the early years, I always had more heart and grit than anyone on the field or the court. So, I think the combination of these two things have been major contributors to my success.

How did you end up getting into CrossFit?

JENNIFER: While I was pregnant with our second child, my husband had gotten really into CrossFit. He would

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come home and tell me stories about some women in the class getting their first pull up and how his name would get circled at the end of a workout. I knew I could do a pull up, and I wanted my name circled! The idea of being strong and competing appealed to me. I had also lost a lot of weight after having our son which also meant I lost a lot of shape. I knew building muscle was the only way to get it back and I knew the competitive aspect would keep me coming back, so it was the perfect formula for me.

Arguably a more important question; how did you make the transition into strictly powerlifting?

JENNIFER: The gym I went to held an unsanctioned push/pull competition. I benched 125 and deadlifted 300lbs for

the first time. I won. When it was over, I said, "now what?" I was handed an entry form to a full power meet and that was it. Hook, line, and sinker.

What do you consider the most essential component of your training? If you could nail your success down to one single line item?

JENNIFER: Consistency.

If you could give one training tip to everyone out there, what would it be?

JENNIFER: I would say be consistent. But since I did; the other tip I often give is about your approach. Watch any successful athlete. Watch their approach to the mound, the free throw line, the tee, the starting blocks. Develop a routine before each lift, do it EVERY time, and for every lift. It becomes rhythmic. You become a machine. It becomes less about the amount of weight on the bar and more about executing the form. From there, it's about imposing your will on the barbell.

Can you break down what a typical training week would look like for you? What is your usual frequency of the competition lifts?

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JENNIFER: I train 4 days a week with a typical split. Usually hitting each main lift twice per week during meet prep. I'll do some steady state cardio as I draw near weigh ins. I stretch when I'm near death.

What are your favorite assistance lifts and why?

JENNIFER: Strict overhead press and front squats. I love them for the pure

brute strength they require.

Do you ever use bands, chains, or other kinds of accommodating resistance in your training? If so, how often do you use them?

JENNIFER: I do not currently use any accommodating resistance. I have in the past, when I first started lifting, but haven't in the last 3 years or so.

Which lift has been the most difficult for you to make progress with? What have you done to push it along?

JENNIFER: Bench has been the most difficult for me to make progress with. When I started working with Aaron it was a huge source of frustration. I started benching more frequently, doing more total sets and reps, and had the chance to feel some heavier weights more often. I was also doing a lot more work with varying grip widths, more direct tricep work, and overhead pressing frequently as well. If I had to nail it down to one thing though, I would say that the increase in volume and frequency helped it the most.

Does your training change as you get closer to important competitions?



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JENNIFER: Generally speaking, my training volume drops and the intensity goes up. It often is something like a heavy single for a few sets, and then some heavy doubles for a few sets. And everything else gets heavier too.

Do you have a coach you work with for your training? If so, how do you feel this has been beneficial for you?

JENNIFER: Aaron Thomas has been writing my programming and nutrition for almost 3 years. Hands down, the best investment I've made. He has pushed me through some actual plateaus and some

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perceived plateaus. I started training at Wade Johnson's gym about 4 years ago. It is a powerlifting gym through and through. He has invested in competition equipment and has taught me the mental capacity it takes to win and to survive Aaron's programming.

Have you dealt with any major injuries? What did you do to overcome it/them?

JENNIFER: No, nothing major. My arm quit working, literally just quit on a bench press in 2015 and said, nah bro, we aren't doing that for a while.

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Never any pain, just would not fire or complete a lift. The first time competed in the USAPL, I competed with this dead arm and it was the best decision I ever made. That meet taught me to look at the meet as a whole, and not just as the individual lifts.

You previously made a joke with me about your favorite lift being the total. I think it makes sense why you have this mentality after having that first experience where your bench

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was off. What did you end up doing to get past this shoulder issue?

JENNIFER: After that meet Aaron had me take 4 weeks off, it was near the holidays so it was easy to do. I was also seeing a chiropractor regularly. Then when I got back in the gym, just started light and made my way back up. I can't say for sure, because I really let Aaron handle programming, but I think we were pretty cautious moving forward with volume and determining what I

can recover from. I also quit my terribly stressful job.

What is your proudest moment in powerlifting to date?

JENNIFER: My performance at Worlds. No question.

Did you exceed your own expectations in terms of performance there? Seems to me your plan was just laid out and you came in and executed perfectly. It was a great meet to watch.

JENNIFER: Going into Worlds, after studying the competition, I knew it would come down to making attempts. So, you're absolutely right, we had a plan and we executed. It seems counterintuitive, but it was quite humbling to not only win my class but break a few world records and win best lifter. I suppose while I expected to execute my plan, I am not sure I expected so many accolades to come along with it.

On the other hand, what would you consider to be your biggest disappointment in powerlifting to date?

JENNIFER: In the days before I competed in USA Powerlifting, I cut to 114 and went after the world record total.

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I was red lighted for depth on my third squat attempt. After all the work I had done to make the cut, and to keep my strength up; I let poor form, technique, and nerves get the best of me. Never again.

So many people talk about not having time to train. You manage to work what I assume is full time, you have two children that are quite young, and you have a husband to top it all

off. How do you have enough time in the day to get it all done?

JENNIFER: It's so cliché. But I make the time. I carve out a niche of time that can be all mine and I spend it lifting heavy shit. I've found with parenting, it's easy to stop taking care of yourself. I have also found that I am no good to my family if I haven't first loved myself.

What does a typical day look like for you?

JENNIFER: The majority of the week I wake up early and train from about 5AM to about 7AM. Work is at 8, I pick up the kids at 3, then it's homework, dinner, bath, and bedtime. I am beating the stick every day, haha!

Why do you choose to compete in USA Powerlifting / the I.P.F. as opposed to the alternatively available organizations in the US?

JENNIFER: When I first started competing, I did not compete in USA Powerlifting as I was naive to most of what was going on in the sport. As I started getting better, I began to notice people paying attention to my lifting career. I was also noticing that, to many, being strong and female could be interpreted



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in less than desirable ways. Specifically that I must be on performance enhancing drugs. I want to provide an ideal model to younger women that being strong does not have mean having to use PED's or dealing with their side effects. I believe USA Powerlifting not only does a great job at highlighting both male and female achievements but also drug free strength as a whole.

What is your opinion on the drug testing that you've had to undergo since becoming a more regular part of USA Powerlifting? Lots of people argue that it's illegitimate and easy to pass under the radar but I think you can speak to the fact that it's not quite so simple.

JENNIFER: Well, because I am relatively new to the federation and relatively good right out of the gate, I can confidently say that being completely unaware of drug testing protocols, the first time a doping control officer showed up at my house at 7am on Sunday morning, I had ZERO clue it was coming. I was then asked to stand in such a way that she could see the urine leaving my body....so, yeah, I don't know how to fake that.

I think that not having any idea it was coming is part of the idea! Have you been tested outside of meets more than once?

JENNIFER: Yes, soon after worlds there was a doping control officer waiting for me at my gym. This was again another complete surprise.

What are your goals for 2017 Raw Nationals?

JENNIFER: Well, first is to win the 57kg open class. I also want to take the world record deadlift, though it will be unofficial, and win best lifter.

How about your more long-term goals?

JENNIFER: This is kind of difficult for me to answer because what keeps me coming back is the ceiling. Whatever my ceiling is, that's what I want to hit. I want to break a 400lb squat, I want to bench double body weight, and I want to break a 550 wilks. I want to sweep best lifter at Nationals, The Arnold, and Raw Worlds. I want to go up to the 63's and win that too. I suppose those are my most recent dangling carrots I've tossed around.

Speaking of long term, how do you

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stay motivated to train year-round?

JENNIFER: I'm not sure that I do. I can expect to not have any motivation AT ALL to train directly after a meet. However, I have learned that motivation comes in waves, and often times, action precedes feelings of motivation. So I just keep showing up and wait for those warm fuzzy feelings and ride them out while they are there.

“IF WHAT YOU WANT IS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL, YOU CANNOT RELY ON FEELINGS. ASK YOURSELF, “WHAT AM I DOING, WHAT ACTION AM I TAKING THAT IS GETTING ME ONE STEP CLOSER TO MY GOAL?” THEN, THE FEELINGS DON’T MATTER. THEY HAVE NO PLACE IN THE PATH TO BECOMING SUCCESSFUL”

I think people don't talk about this idea enough. Lots of times athletes have the expectation of being fired up year-round and think something is wrong when they go through a low period immediately after a competition or at random during their off-season. What advice would you give to people who are currently struggling with dwindling motivation?

JENNIFER: Ask yourself, what are you chasing? What's the goal? If you're chasing a "feeling," stay in bed and wait for the feeling. The feeling will come eventually and it will leave again. If what you want is to achieve your goal, you cannot rely on feelings. Ask yourself, "what am I doing, what action am I taking that is getting me one step closer to my goal?" Then, the feelings don't matter. They have no place in the path to becoming successful. They are fleeting. They are temporary. When you're standing on top of the mountain, you'll know it was your actions that got you there, not your precious little feelings.

Do you feel your mentality and motivation levels play a big role in your success as an athlete?

JENNIFER: Absolutely. While being physically strong is a huge chunk of any success, I would offer that being mentally prepared/strong is as equally important. The good news is that you can train both.

As a change of pace, tell us something nobody would know or guess about you?

JENNIFER: Many people seem to find it surprising that I've got a great sense of humor. I think it's my lack of smiling that throws people off.

And a very important question; what is your favorite food?

JENNIFER: Can I say GOOD food? I have a fondness for family meals and anything prepared with love. I really can't answer this question.....I like all the food. A good cheeseburger is near the top though.

Where can we find you on the internet/social media?

JENNIFER: On Instagram you can find me @jenmillican. I have a blog at poweryourown.blogspot.com

Thanks for taking the time, Jennifer. Good luck at Raw Nationals!

JENNIFER: My pleasure! Thank you, Hani! **PM**