My first meet

Ben Dearman

I am a power lifter. I love being strong. I get the greatest joy out of seeing someone bigger then me, try to move what I move. The funny thing is, I am not even that strong. I've only done one competition and I have only been training for 8 months. I like to think I have decent form in the bench, squat and dead lift. But, let's be honest, I have only been really hitting the weights for 8 months, so how good can it really be?

But none the less, I have competed in my first meet.

I am a power lifter and I coach other power lifters.

You're probably thinking, "If this guy has only been training in power lifting for 8 months, what kind of coaching can he give?" Your right, not the greatest, but I give coaching from my experience and education. And since no one I coach can lift more then me, I have the stand point of someone who has been there. Nothing drives me crazy more than a personal trainer trying to tell me and other people that squatting 400 lbs or dead lifting 500 lbs "isn't that hard". Better yet, why don't you go up to a professional Mixed Martial Artists and tell him throwing a punch "isn't that hard" or choking someone out "isn't that hard".

See what happens.

I took five people (including myself) to the Granite City Iron Wars V in Barre, VT on April 12th. It was a 100% RAW, AAU and AAPF meet. I really didn't (and still don't) know what any of those initials meant, but, I understood that it was a "RAW" meet, so that was enough for me. I had no idea what to expect except what I have read off of elitefts.com and other sites. My main competing background is in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Mixed Martial Arts, so I only had that as competition reference. I was expecting to see big crazy looking dudes with goatees, shaved heads and tattoos of dragons, skulls, roaring lion heads, stabbed bleeding hearts etc. I didn't see any of those. Except for one guy, who was fairly big with a typical power lifter build and a moderate gut wearing a shirt that said "I beat anorexia" with army cargo shorts. Everyone there was AMAZINGLY hospitable and eagerly nice. It was a very small meet with only about 20 or so competitors.

The rules meeting started kind of how I expected it, people looking around "sizing" up other people wondering what weight class they were in and how old they were. But once the warm ups started everything changed. I actually got tons of compliments on my squat and bench form. I was shocked! You rarely get complimented in a BJJ/MMA match until after the fight, and then you never know if the guy is sincere or not. He might be giving you a compliment because he feels bad about choking you out or breaking your arm. Or he might really mean it. But I got a compliment before the meet even started! Totally threw me for a loop.

I am used to wearing singlets from my days wrestling, and I'm also used to wearing fight shorts when I used to compete in martial arts. However, thankfully, the board shorts transitioned in. I never was too concerned about how I looked; I was more concerned about not getting anything broken. However, I must admit I felt a little self conscious with the singlet on. I kept feeling like one of my "fellas" might pop out. Poor head referee, he probably saw more of my kibbles and bits then any one man should. Because of this, I was constantly pulling down my singlet legs.

The Squat

I hit all three attempts although on my first attempt I racked it before the head judge gave the command so I didn't officially get it. I was a little over excited I guess. My next two sets were much better with my 3rd attempt feeling the best and also setting a PR at 403. My 1st and 2nd attempts were 360 and 380 respectively. I felt like I could have gone higher, especially when I saw what the refs were calling as "good lifts". Guys were barely breaking parallel! We were not used to squatting without a box so I was constantly giving the command for up when we hit parallel. What was happening was that everyone was rounding at the upper back when they came up. They never did it during practice so I couldn't figure out why they were doing it now. It wasn't until one of the refs filled me in that it meant sense. He said that since we weren't used to squatting without a box, the UP command that we were yelling was screwing everyone up. The bar was still descending as they heard the command to go up, so they put the brakes on to reverse the motion back up. As they did that, they lost their groove and started rounding at the upper back. He then went on to say, use the hole, go down and blast out, use the spring generated by bottom of the lift to spring up. We got all up in the hole. We listened and everyone's squat went back to normal.

Thank you for the advice skinny calved judge. Every attempt was ended with me pulling down my singlet's legs.

The Bench

The bench press went good. I opened with 300, pausing was a little new to me but I just kept telling myself to squeeze the bar hard, flare the lats and tuck the elbows. It was maybe a 1 second pause tops, the head judge said it was perfect! I was worried about the pause but he said as long as it's brought down tight and controlled it's a very minimal pause. My next lift was 317 which I nailed for a PR. My final lift was 330, I got crapped on with that. I freaked out when I brought it out, lost my concentration, threw my groove off and basically turned it into a JM press and almost cracked my skull open. The spotters were right on top of me. I give props to those guys, they did a great job and there were no injuries at the meet or any dangerous situations.

Yet more pulling of the singlet, some people got some good shots of a speed bump while I was laying down on the bench.

The Dead Lift

I love the DL; there is just something about it that appeals to me. It's just so raw; you either pick it up or not. I also think it's the best indicator of full body strength. My opener was 440 which went up easy. I moved to 460 and nailed it. My third attempt was at a PR of 475 and hit it like it was 440. I ended feeling very good with the dead lift.

Sweat pants came on directly after I was done lifting.

Things I would have done different – Buy a smaller singlet. That's kind of counter intuitive, but I think if it's smaller at least it won't ride up so much. I also want to try and hit a PR on my 2nd attempt as opposed to my 3rd. If I nail the PR then I would only move 5 or 10 lbs up in weight for my 3rd attempt. My shoulders were very stiff and sore after Saturdays meet and I think it was due to losing my groove in the bench and pressing from my shoulders. Everything else felt surprisingly good. I took off for about a week before the meet and when the meet came around I was definitely chomping at the bit to tear in to the weight. I think next time I will try some light supplement lifts about 5 days out and some light sled work 2-3 days out.

Claremont here I come!