

SHAW STRENGTH

BY BRIAN SHAW



NOTICE

The information in this book is intended to be used as an informational guide on methods of training to augment a sound exercise program. The information in this book is not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional. As with all exercise programs it is advised that you seek the advice of a medical professional before beginning any exercise program. The writer and publishers recommend that the reader take full responsibility to ensure that they are cleared by a medical professional before beginning any part of this training program. Any mention of specific companies, products, organizations or other authors does not imply that they endorse or approve of the methods outlined in this book, nor does it imply that the authors approve of them or their methods.

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Introduction

I wrote this book for several reasons. I feel like my training and life in general has been somewhat of a mystery up to this point. I haven't really put much out there in the way of my training philosophy, recovery methods, etc. One of the reasons for this is I like to let my performance speak for itself. I have never been one to be flashy or put myself out there all the time, nor do I want or need everyone's praise or attention. But along the way in my own strength journey I have learned a lot from others, and had many resources that have really helped me get to where I am today. I feel like it is time to share some of my knowledge and experience and give back to the sport that has given me so much. I hope that someone will read this book and absorb everything in it and one day too stand atop the podium. The benefits of this book however, are not limited to strongman. I also wrote this book for anyone out there who wants to get massively strong. The principles written in this book will help powerlifters, CrossFitters, weightlifters, throwers, football players, or anyone who wants to increase their strength levels. Even more than that, I hope it inspires an ideal. I hope it gives people the motivation to go after their dreams and to aspire to truly be great. I wasn't always the World's Strongest Man. I too had to start with the first step. I was a tall, lanky basketball player when I first fell in love with strength, but I had the determination to aspire to greatness. Here is the story of my strongman journey and the principles I used to reach the top of the strongman world.

Be Great

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life—think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves and every part of your body be full of that idea. And just leave every other idea alone. That is the way to success. If you walk into ShawStrength gym, you will see on the wall a banner that reads “Be Great.” At any given training session, you will hear my training partners and I yelling this mantra out to each other, helping each other strive for greatness. This simple phrase came to me one day as I was preparing for World’s in 2011. I wrote it on my wall, and now it is a permanent reminder of what I strive for. This is not just some catch phrase or a gimmick, it is a mantra I live by. It is the very core of all I do. Whether playing college basketball, working as a strength and conditioning coach, competing in strongman, or whatever I find myself doing in life, I aspire to greatness.

I want to make a distinction here about what it means to be great. Being great does not necessarily mean winning World’s Strongest Man, winning a world championship, or setting world records. It means striving for excellence and being the absolute best you can be. It means never setting limits on what you can accomplish. It means putting one hundred percent effort into reaching your goals and never settling for less. Life is short. Why aspire to be average? Why not give it everything you have? Being great means not looking back and not having regrets about what you could have done. There is a saying that goes, “the pain of discipline is far less than the pain of regret.” Go out, work your ass off. Go after your dreams and goals with no regrets.

To reach your goal you must make that goal a part of your being. It may sound crazy, but to reach a crazy goal we have to be prepared to put everything else aside. Of course, there are things in life that have to be taken care of outside of training. I’m not saying forsake your family, friends, or job. What I am saying is once you find that ideal, that goal, don’t get pulled away from it by a million other ideas. If you are constantly being pulled in a million directions, or half way committed to several different big goals it just is not going to work. Eventually you will be spread too thin and will end up reaching none of your goals. I believe in fully committing to one massive dream and then giving every last thing you have to make the dream happen. My massive dream all began in Fort Lupton, Colorado.

Where It All Began

I was always a big kid growing up. No doubt there are some big people in my family and I was no different. As a kid I gravitated towards sports and athletics. With my height, the sport I really enjoyed and excelled at the most was basketball. Although I was a big kid, I still worked hard to develop my skills on the court. This hard work was something instilled by my parents early on in my life. I owe a lot to my parents. They never let me quit when I was growing up and always taught me the benefits of hard work. I learned that my genetics alone are not enough to excel. I also needed the work ethic to go with it. This lesson still carries over to this day, and has helped me reach my dreams and goals. One of those dreams was playing college basketball. I really enjoyed playing ball in college. It was a blast. But it was during this time I fell in love with weights and strength training. Of course in high school I worked out and did conditioning, but in college we really had a great strength and conditioning program. Under this new program I developed strength well and began to really enjoy the science and process of getting stronger. This led me to want to study it more. I began implementing the things I was learning into my own training. It rapidly became clear to me that I had found my true love. Basketball was great, but my love for the iron superseded that. The weight room became a sort of sanctuary for me, I learned that I would rather be in the gym than anywhere else.

When I finished college and my basketball career and saw an advertisement for the Denver's Strongest Man contest and decided to give it a shot. At this point I hadn't even trained the strongman events, I had only done gym training. However, I wasn't scared to take a chance and compete anyway. I also wasn't ready for my athletic career to be over and the fact that the sport was strength based was even better. I went out to the contest and was instantly hooked. I enjoyed every second of it and was even able to win the contest. Right away I knew that I had found my dream and goal. Although I was a long way from winning the World's Strongest Man contest, I decided to make that my lofty goal. In my opinion, there is no cooler title than the title of World's Strongest Man. To be the strongest out of seven billion other people is what I set out to do. Why dream small? I just decided to go for it.

The Next Level – Turning Pro

From then on, I became obsessed with getting better at strongman. I began to slowly piece together whatever equipment I could. I started gearing my training towards strongman. I learned from everyone I could and studied videos of strongman. As I entered more and more contests, I continued to experience more and more success. In 2006, I was able to reach a big milestone by turning pro in strongman. This only further strengthened my resolve to one day win the World's Strongest Man and to truly become great at this sport. One of my first pro contests was the Fit Expo in Los Angeles. This contest is a big proving ground for pro strongman. If I could hang with the guys out there, I would be in a good spot. I went out there and competed hard. In this contest there was a cut, so only the top 12 guys went through to the last events. Unfortunately, I finished in 13th, and didn't make the cut. This was pretty heart breaking to me, but it showed me something. It showed me even though I had done well in the amateurs, the pro level was a whole new ball game. If I was going to compete successfully as a pro, I was going to have to step up everything to the next level. So I went home, fueled with that disappointment, back to the drawing board. I was determined I would go back and win that contest. I trained like an animal, ate more than ever, and kept learning. I was determined to keep going after my goal. In fact, I even made the sacrifice to drive an hour every day for my training because that's how far my storage facility was. The owner let me keep my equipment there for free. So after a hard day's work as a strength and conditioning coach, I would make the hour long drive to train, then drive an hour back home, and get up the next day to do it all again. If you really want to reach your goals, you simply have to find a way to make it happen. There can be no excuses.

Reaching the Nexus – First World's Strongest Man

2008 marked a banner year for my strongman career. I performed well enough to earn my spot competing in my first World's Strongest Man contest. What's more is that I was going to get the chance to compete against none other than the 5 time World's Strongest Man Mariusz Pudzianowski in my heat. I can't tell you how amped up I was for this. I actually thrived off of the fact that I had Mariusz in my heat. I always prefer to compete against the best competition possible, as this will push me to do my very best. Even though this was my first World's, I put myself into a place mentally that I thought I could still go there and win. That might sound crazy, but it is how I go into every contest, even back then. If it is going to happen, you have to believe it first. Going to World's was an incredible experience. I realized why World's is what it is. There is something in the air at World's that is different from any other contest. Being amongst the best from all over the planet, doing TV interviews, and going through the whole World's experience was something new to me. I knew though, that I couldn't stay star struck for long. I had to get to work and focus on the event.

I was able to do well on a few of the events in my heat and really went after every event with everything I had. But at the end of the day, I didn't make it through to the finals and placed 3rd. Some were trying to tell me that it was my first time there and I would have plenty more shots in the future. I knew they were right, but being the competitor I am, I was still not happy to be going home early. However, the positive thing I took away from the contest was knowing that I could compete at that level. I was close to making the finals. As I flew back home, I knew this would never happen to me again. Throughout the next year I would put in the work to make sure of it.



Photo courtesy of IronMind.com

Welcome to the Podium

2009 really got off to a strong start. I did what I set out to do, which was to win the L.A. Fit Expo. This was my first big win as a pro strongman. The win meant a lot to me considering only a couple of years earlier, I didn't even make the cut for the last events. This set the tone for the rest of the year. I continued to have success and win several other contests throughout the year. When the 2009 World's Strongest Man contest rolled around, I had a lot of good momentum and could not wait to get out to Malta and show what I could do.

Malta was an amazing location for World's and the events were great. It also marked the return of Zydrunas Savickas to WSM after a few years of absence competing with IFSA. We ended up in the same heat and we both made it to the finals. I performed

well against Z which was a good indicator of how I would perform in the finals. Now the real contest began. I felt a big weight off my shoulders making it through to the finals, but I still had a lot of expectations for myself. I was there in the fight the whole way and was placing up on the scoreboard throughout the finals. But the real highlight for me came on the arm over arm boat pull. This is a really cool event set on the water with the waves crashing below you. This was not an easy event and many guys were struggling, but I knew this was a good event for me. In the past, I have always performed well on the arm over arm and knew I really needed to have another great performance to have a shot at making it on the podium, or even winning. Before the whistle was blown, I was extremely focused. I attacked the rope and made each grab at the rope perfect. I was in the zone. It's a cool thing to be in the zone, especially at the World's Strongest Man contest. It's almost an out of body experience. I can barely remember the pull, but before I knew it I had finished pulling the boat up the ramp and had won the event. I was really on fire in that moment and couldn't help but let out a few screams, the adrenaline was really flowing. With the help of this performance, I was able to finish in 3rd at my first World's Strongest Man final. Standing on the podium with Zydrunas and Mariusz was a very surreal thing for me. Knowing I had gone toe to toe with the two best strongmen of all time was extremely gratifying. But more importantly, it meant I was right there, knocking on the door of winning the World's Strongest Man. The podium was nice, but now I wanted the win more than ever.

The Sandbag

At the 2010 World's Strongest Man contest, I made it through easily to the finals. I was looking for a great start with the first event. The first event in the finals was a sandbag loading medley in water. This was difficult for everyone as the water threw in an added level of difficulty. The sandbags were slipping from the water, and guys were falling down, it was brutal. Nevertheless, I was making good time and was in a position to win the event if I just loaded the final sandbag. I placed the bag on the platform and raised my hands in the air because the clock will not stop until the hands are off of the bag. But as my hands were raised the sandbag slipped off of the platform and back into the water. To me it seemed like the sandbag slipped off in slow motion. The rule is that the sandbag must stay on the platform in order for your time to be stopped and if it falls off you must load it again. I maintained my composure the best I could and picked it back up and loaded it again. This time it stayed on and I ended up getting third place instead of first. That may not seem like that big of a deal, third is not a bad placing. But at the World's Strongest Man competition every last point is crucial. When you are up against the best strength athletes in the world, there is really no wiggle room to lose a point or two. I was feeling very confident about coming back and making up those points, but I also knew the mistake could come back to haunt me later on. I battled it out hard over the next few events. Stones were the last event, and I was still in position to win the contest. I won the stones which put Zydrunas and I in a tie for first overall. This was the first and only tie ever in World's Strongest Man history. They did a countback on the events and it turned out Zydrunas won the contest, even though we tied on points. This was a hard pill to swallow. My previous concerns were proved right, if I would have secured the last sandbag on the platform I would have won my first World's Strongest Man title. Of course in any contest there will always be things you wish you would have done better, but this one hit hard. To come so close to winning the world championships but falling short because of a little mistake, left a sickening feeling in my stomach. I ended up in second that year and as I stood on the platform applauding Big Z for his win, I knew my time would come. I now had more fuel than ever to win the World's Strongest Man. I knew I would turn the sandbag mistake into a positive over the next year. I would use it as motivation in my training and come back stronger than ever. In any contest or situation in life, when things don't go the right way, you have a choice to

make. You can either let it affect you in a negative way by getting down in the dumps and giving up, or you can react in a positive way by using it as motivation to come back stronger than ever. If you aspire to greatness, you must choose the latter. Over the next year, I watched that sandbag load and fall many times. It spurred me on in my training more and more each day. I knew when the time came I wouldn't make that mistake again. That year of training, fueled on by the feeling of standing on the second rung of the podium and not the top, lead me into the 2011 World's Strongest Man contest.



MET-RX

THE MOST STRONGEST MAN



WINGATE UNIVERSITY
USA 2011

Wingate – Top of the Podium

At the 2011 World's Strongest Man, my training was on point, and my nutrition was on point. I was coming off of a win at the Arnold Classic. All signs pointed to me finishing the job and winning the contest. Frankly, I knew I was not leaving Wingate, North Carolina without the trophy. I simply had to win the contest. I knew I was in for a good fight, but I had made up my mind. Half way through the finals I had a good lead, but after the log lift Zydrunas had closed the gap. This made things very close going into the final event, the stones. I could not have been any more confident going into the stones. There was no room for doubt and no room for worry. As far as I was concerned, I had already won the stones. There is really no other way to think when the title is on the line on the final event against Big Z. I won't say there was no nerves at all, there was plenty of nerves, but I had to believe one hundred percent I was going to win.

I made the point to really focus on one stone at a time. I knew if I did that and had a run with no mistakes, I would win. The whistle blew and everything else faded away. I didn't hear the crowd, didn't see the cameras, or anything else. It was just me throwing the stones up one by one. When I loaded the final stone, I turned to see that Savickas hadn't loaded his yet, and all I felt was absolute overwhelming joy. I had done it, I was the World's Strongest Man! Elation came along with a sense of relief. Having come so close over the two previous years, the monkey was off my back. Standing on top of the podium and holding the golden trophy, I was on top of the world. It took quite a while for the win to set in. I worked hard day in and day out with every fiber of my being, so finally reaching my goal felt surreal.

No Complacency

Winning the 2011 World's Strongest Man competition was obviously a massive dream come true. As great as it was, my training crew and everybody at home were worried about how I would respond to winning. They were worried I might get a big head, or I would be satisfied with winning once. After all, I had reached a major goal, so I can understand where they were coming from. But winning World's Strongest Man had the opposite effect. The feeling of placing the final stone on the platform, knowing I had won the title was something I wanted to feel again. The experience of standing on top of the podium and holding the trophy in the air was something I wanted to experience again. The satisfaction of putting my heart and soul into a goal and seeing it come to fruition is something I wanted to feel again. Because of this, I didn't miss a beat in training. I enjoyed the win, but when I got back home I went right back to work.

Not only did I want to have that feeling again, but also there is always something to improve on. I want to be as close to perfect as possible as a strength athlete. Although I reached the top of the sport, I knew there were events I could improve on, so there was no time to bask in the victory. In a way, I am thankful for the fact that I can never reach perfection. Vince Lombardi once said, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence." I will never set limits on my strength and because of that, there will always be a new goal to reach, a new mountain to climb.

In 2012, I suffered a full bicep tear at the Arnold Classic. The injury required surgery to reattach the bicep back to the tendon. I was pretty low at that point, but I immediately got the surgery and began the rehab process. I stayed as positive throughout the process as I could and worked my way back to compete at WSM again. Even though I rehabbed my bicep and went through that ordeal, a new problem arose. I began to have some serious nerve issues in my hand. It kept getting worse in training until I could barely grip anything. I decided to press on in training and go compete. At the contest, the nerve problem was worse than ever. I had to have help getting dressed in my room because I could not even tie my own shoes or get my supportive gear on by myself. I hid the injury because I didn't want to show how bad the injury was or show any weakness to the other competitors. I fought through, but I could not even feel the rope on truck pull or even tell if my hand was working on the other events. It was one of

the worst things I have ever been through. Nevertheless, I gave it everything I had and somehow was able to take 4th at World's. Despite finding a way to take 4th at World's, it became very clear that this was a big problem with my strongman career and life in general. This was not something that I could just work through. Those were some pretty dark days. If ever there was a time I could have been complacent and rested on my laurels, this would have been it. My strongman future seemed in doubt. I could have said at this point, "Well, it's been a good run, I have reached the top, no shame in saying goodbye now." But I knew there was still so much left to do in strongman. I still had a passion to be great in the sport, and had many more things to accomplish. I wasn't ready to be complacent just yet.



I sought out the best advice and the best doctors that I could to get my nerve issue fixed. I went in for surgery and finally got the nerve problem fixed, but that was just the beginning of my recovery. After surgery, I went to hand therapy 2-3 days per week

just to learn how to move my fingers again. World's Strongest Man 2013 was only 12 weeks after my surgery. My hand recovered enough that I was able to win my second WSM title and follow it up with my third title in 2015. Had I sat back and been complacent or felt sorry for myself and quit, I would never have had the joy of holding that trophy on top of the podium again. At the time of the writing of this book, we are two years post hand surgery and I still don't have all my strength back in my hand. It is still something I struggle with, but I refuse to let it stop me from reaching my goals. I think a part of my determination to set goals higher and higher was influenced by one of my heroes growing up. Coming from a basketball background, Michael Jordan was somebody I really looked up to and learned from. Michael Jordan never settled for winning one championship or one MVP, he always wanted another one. It was his determination to always strive for the next goal that ultimately made him the best basketball player of all time. I want to be the same way and never be satisfied, constantly striving to be even better than the year or the contest before. This is the way to be great.





Rivalry with Big Z

I want to make a special mention of something that has been a big factor and has really pushed me in my career. By far, my biggest rival throughout my strongman career has been Zydrunas Savickas. Time after time it seems contests, especially World's Strongest Man, have come down to us. It seems like only one or two points separate us at the end of a contest. I want to say, first and foremost, that I have the upmost respect for Zydrunas. He is an absolutely amazing strongman whose record speaks for itself. I am actually glad to have Z as my rival because I know it has bettered me as a strongman. We have really had to push each other throughout the years. I don't really know Z on a personal level, and I don't know what he thinks of me on a personal level, but I don't care. I know that he respects me and I respect him and that is enough. When you compete with someone as fiercely as we do it's tough to be buddy-buddy with that person. Perhaps one day Z and I can know each other a little better and rem-

inise about our careers, but that time is not now. For now, we will keep battling it out. People are always wondering when Z will retire, but he keeps going stronger than ever. Who knows, maybe Zydrunas and I will keep competing against each other for many more years to come. I always enjoyed seeing the rivalries in strongman like Kaz and Jon Pall. Hopefully one day people look at our rivalry like that.

Training Overview

Now that we have the story of my strongman journey, let's break down my training step by step. The following covers the training methods, event techniques, and other intangibles that I have used to become a multiple time World's Strongest Man.



Strongman is an ever changing sport. There are many variables to account for in any training program. Nevertheless I will cover the most important aspects and other intangibles that go with a great training program. They are as follows:

- Squats
- Building a Monster Deadlift
- Pressing Power
- Overhead Implement Training
- Strongman Event Training

- Conditioning
- The Mental Aspects
- The Importance of a Good Training Crew



Photo by Jason Breeze



Photo by Jason Breeze

Training Overview: Squats

The approach I take to squats is that they are first and foremost an assistance movement for the other strongman events, especially the deadlift. In strongman, the only squat I seem to come across in competition is at the World's Strongest Man contest. Even there it is rare that I am squatting because I usually have a deadlift of some sort. I also had a conversation with Bill Kazmaier that heavily influenced my training philosophy. He once said that squatting with a regular bar really caused shoulder problems for him. This was because his size really hindered his ability to properly fit under the bar. Since I have the same problem, I realized there was no point in banging up my shoulders when I have no need to. I can still get the benefits of squatting using different bars, because of this I never do a standard straight bar back squat in training. I prefer to train the squat with different bars from different angles and normally off of a box. Training box squats has been a crucial part of bringing up my deadlift. In order to come up off of the box, your hips are forced to fire in a way that is very conducive to building deadlift strength. Box squats are usually done to parallel. Even if I were a powerlifter instead of strongman I would still train squats this way. To prove my point on this we can take the 2014 World's Strongest Man as an example. I had only been training squats to a box with different bars, and adding chains and bands etc. leading up to the contest. At the last minute, I found out I would have to do the axle squat for reps in the finals. So just to get the feel for it I did one squat session with the axle and it felt very easy. I went to the contest and was able to get 10 reps with a 725 pound axle. Because I had trained squats that were much more difficult than standard bar back squats the transition was very easy. My standard squat was much stronger than it would have been had I not trained squats this way. Training with specialty bars really increases the difficulty by bringing in more lower and upper back. Because of my size and arm length, it is also difficult to hold a standard bar in the correct position on front squats, so I use the safety squat bar for front squats as well. I simply turn it around and place it across my throat and shoulders.

The bars that I rotate every week for squats in training are as follows:

- Safety Squat Bar
- Spider bar

- Cambered bar
- Safety Squat Bar front squats



Training Overview: Building a Monster Deadlift

The year was 2012. The setting was the Arnold Strongman Classic. There in front of me was the awesome hummer tire deadlift setup, loaded with 1073 pounds. My left bicep was torn from the first event of the competition. Five thousand people were watching, wanting me to make the lift. My adrenaline was already through the roof. I took a hit of ammonia and it went to another level. Completely focused on the task at hand, I approached the bar with violent intentions. I strapped in to the bar, set my hips and with every ounce of my being began to lift the massive weight. I could hear the voice of Bill Kazmaier on the mic saying, "Power!" I felt the tires one by one come off the ground until I had the full weight of the bar in my hands. Now the real battle began. I could feel my bicep tearing even more, but I ignored it and kept pulling. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I fought to lockout the weight. From the effort and enormous pressure, blood began pouring out of my nose. I got the down signal from head referee Magnus ver Magnusson. It was a good lift. I dropped the bar, and heard the roar of the crowd. I held out my arms and took it all in. In that moment I felt alive. There is nothing else quite like picking up a massive weight off the floor and locking it out. The result of that day did not happen by accident. It was the result of consistent work, planned out over time.

I was once told that I would never be a great deadlifter because of my height. For this reason, my deadlift strength is a source of great pride for me. Not only did I bust through the supposed height barrier on the deadlift, it became one of my biggest strengths. Now at a height of 6 foot 8, I am knocking on the door of a thousand pound deadlift. When people try and set barriers on your goals, use it as motivation to break through them. Focus on being great no matter what people say. As you think about whatever barriers you have facing you in reaching your goals take a look at this list of my best deadlifts to date:

- Competition from the floor (with straps) – 975
- Arnold classic hummer tire deadlift – 1128
- Training from the floor (with straps) – 985

As you can see, I refused to let other people's weak minded thinking stop me. Instead I got to work on building my deadlift. Whatever your goals are, remember that if I can do

it so can you.

It is safe to say that the majority of people in strength sports see the deadlift as the “King of Lifts.” I would have to agree. Deadlifts are a true test of overall brute power. Almost every muscle in the body is used on the deadlift. This also means that the deadlift is not only a great test of overall strength, but also an overall builder of strength. In strongman most of the events require that you pick something up off the ground. For this reason, it is obvious why deadlifting strength is paramount to success as a strongman. When we take a look back at the winners at World’s Strongest Man, a great deadlift is a common denominator.

I am of the belief that if you want to be better at deadlifting you have to deadlift. This is why I train deadlift every week, year round. Some people feel like they can’t deadlift every week or their body will simply not recover. I think one of the reasons some can’t deadlift every week is because of form. If you are pulling stiff legged, with a rounded lower back constantly pulling maximal weights every week, then of course your body will not be able to handle it. If you can get your legs involved as much as possible and keep your lower back from rounding, then recovery will be much improved. This will allow you to pull every week. Notice I didn’t say keep the upper back from rounding. Some upper back rounding is inevitable as the weights get heavier. This is not ideal, but it is much safer than rounding in the lower back. I will normally train heavy for three to four weeks and then cycle in an off/deload day on either my fourth or fifth week. If I’m prepping for a specific event, I will start heavier max training around 12 weeks in advance.

Effort and Speed

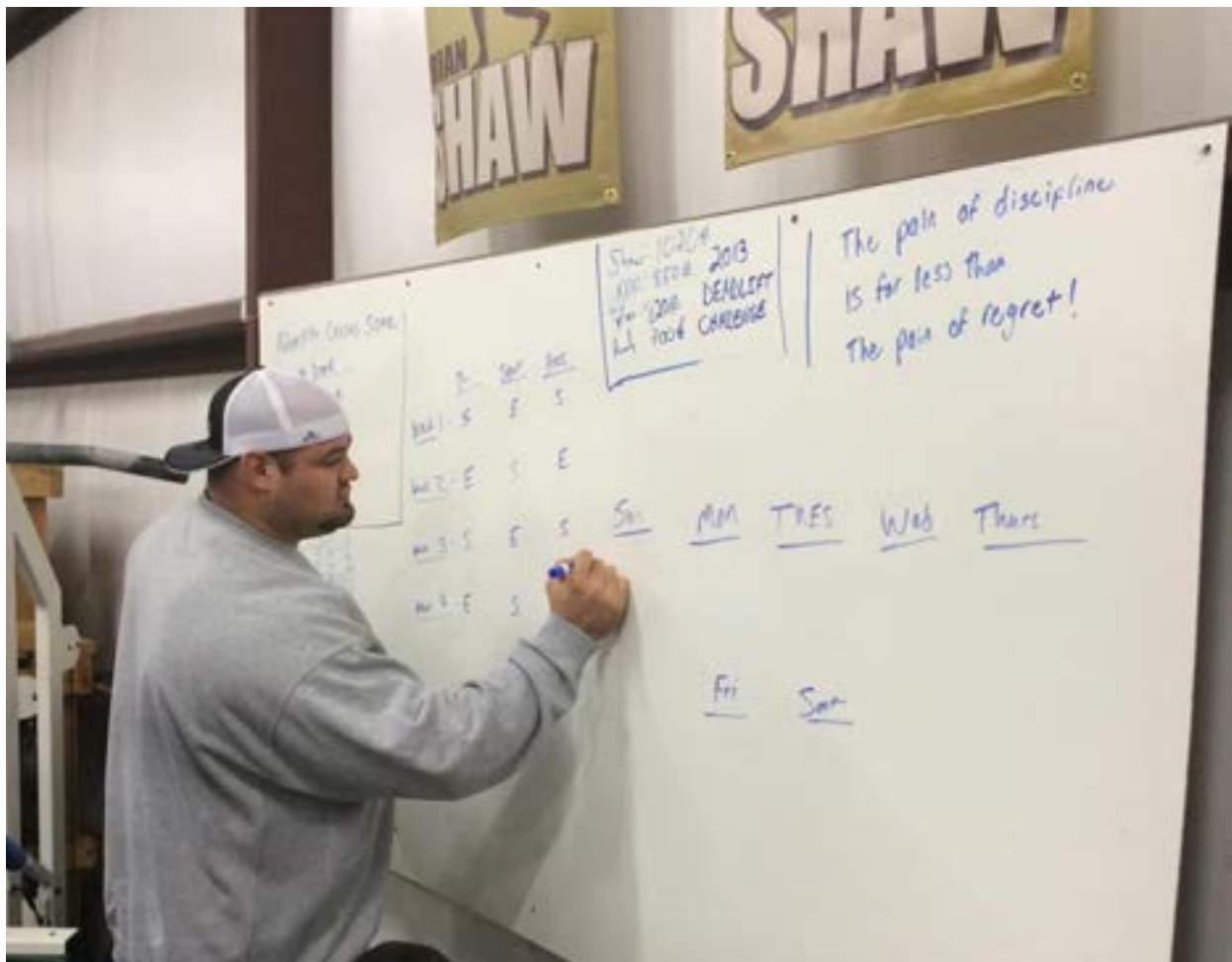
Every week I rotate between speed and effort days on squats and deadlifts. I will do speed squats and effort deadlift one week, then the following week I will do effort squat and speed deadlift. I define effort as heavier weight when my repetition range goes no higher than 5 reps. On my heavier effort days, I rotate between sets of 1–5 reps to build strength. I will do progressively heavier sets, adding a 45-pound plate to each side per set, then 25’s and 10’s until my form breaks down. That’s when I stop for the day. For example, if I’m doing sets of five, I would start with light weight, like

135 or 225, and do a set of 5 then increase the weight for another set of 5. Normally I would complete around 5 to 8 work sets after a few warmup sets. My speed work stays around 50 percent of bar weight for 2-3 reps. I will do either 8 sets of 2 on speed work or 6 sets of 3. I tend to keep my rest time on speed work to no more than 60 seconds. In time I have found, my body can only deadlift for effort every 14 days. The weights I am pulling are pretty demanding on the body as well, so 14 days seems to be the sweet spot for me.

Let me break down the most crucial steps to building a big deadlift, including what I consider to be the best assistance exercises.

- **You need a good solid plan**

You won't just accidentally become a good deadlifter. You have to think it through. I schedule an entire day around deadlifting. If I have a contest coming up, I write out exactly how I am going to build the deadlift over the course of 12 weeks. Make a day completely centered on deadlifting. To become a good deadlifter it can't just be an after-thought.



- **You have to get your legs involved**

I touched on this already, but want to go more in depth here. The legs are the biggest and most powerful muscle group on the body, yet most people fail to properly utilize them on the deadlift. If you watch me deadlift, before I lift I set my hips into a powerful position in order to maximize leg drive. Before you begin your pull, drop your hips low before each lift. The butt may come up a little at the start of the lift, but do your best to avoid this. Getting more leg drive will take some getting used to, in fact you may even be weaker at first. For this reason, start light and work your way up while you get used to pulling this way.

- **The importance of upper back strength**

Often the lower back and posterior chain are the focus of an athlete's deadlift training. However, people forget that having a strong upper back is key to having a big pull. The lats, rhomboids, traps, teres major and minor are all utilized heavily on the deadlift. A lifter's back development is a good indicator of whether or not that person is a good deadlifter. For this reason, I incorporate tons of upper back work into my training. Different variations of rows, pulldowns, and pull-ups are staples in my training. I rotate them every week.



- **Pull from different heights with added resistance**

Every week I am rotating how I deadlift, in order to blast every area of the deadlift and to be as strong as possible from every position possible. A big mistake I see

lifters making is only pulling from the floor. In order to really build your deadlift you need to find your weak spot. Once you find that spot pull from just above and just below. Then work your way up and down from that spot over time. For example, if you have a 15 inch deadlift in a contest set up a 4 week cycle. The first week you could pull from 11 inches. The following week, 13. Then 15, and the final week at 17. Each week mix in chains and bands from the different heights. If you load chains on the bar remember that the important thing is for the chains to load and deload. If you are using chains that aren't actually deloading then you are not getting the full benefit. Without the deload the chains will force you to stabilize, which is of benefit, but the accommodating resistance you are going for isn't there. Bands are one of my favorite ways to really strengthen the deadlift because just like chains, they really build lockout power.

- **Foot stance**

Where you place your feet on a deadlift is really determined by where it is that you feel the most powerful from. Personally, I place my feet wider than most because I feel the strongest from that position. Going wider also gets me a little lower to the ground, thereby shortening my pull. This stance also gives me more power for the lock out portion of the lift, which is where I have tended to stall out in the past. It has taken years of trial and error using different stances to find out what works for me. There is really no cut and dry answer to foot position, simply find the position that works best for you.

BEST ASSISTANCE EXERCISES FOR BUILDING A BIG DEADLIFT

GLUTE HAM RAISES

I incorporate glute ham raises into my training every week. I have consistently seen the benefits of these in building my deadlift. Glute ham raises target the hamstrings, glutes, and lower back in such a way that it becomes almost impossible for the deadlift to not go up. As you get stronger on these, try increasing the difficulty by adding a band or chain around your neck or holding a plate. If your aim is to build a monster deadlift, incorporate these into your training program.

THE STRONGMAN EVENTS

As stated earlier, almost every strongman event requires that you pick something up

off the ground. This is one of the reasons strongmen are such good deadlifters. You don't have to be a strongman to see the benefits of the strongman events. Powerlifters, crossfitters, or any strength athlete can see a significant improvement in the deadlift by throwing in some strongman events. Do a strongman Saturday or pick a day during the week where you can do some strongman training. This doesn't have to be done weekly, it can be done every other week. Stones, farmer's walks, and even things like keg or sandbag carries can really help build the deadlift. There is the initial pick up off the ground, but also a tremendous demand placed on the hamstrings when walking with them.

Rows

I love rows for building the upper back. Different variations are utilized in my training including single and double arm seated rows, heavy dumbbell rows, and barbell rows. I also rotate my grips or the handle I am using on rows from workout to workout to ensure that I am hitting my back from every angle possible. For building over all upper back power heavy rows are crucial. I rotate different rowing movements from week to week.



GOOD MORNINGS

One of my favorite variations of good mornings is to do them from a bottom position at a dead stop. This can be done out of chains or on a rack. I prefer doing them from suspended chains with a cambered bar. Doing them from a stop helps build that initial pulling strength needed on the deadlift. It is good to vary your foot stance on good mornings. Do narrow, medium, and wide stance good mornings in order to really strengthen every position. This can be done by either doing one set at each foot position in your workout, or by changing your foot stance weekly over three weeks.

SHRUGS

Having strong traps is crucial to the deadlift and shrugs are a great way to build them. Every week I rotate between frame/farmer's shrugs and regular barbell shrugs. This is also important for the farmer's walk.

CHIN UPS/PULLDOWNS

Lat strength is extremely important throughout the pull on a deadlift. No lats usually equals no pulling power. To blast these I alternate grips on pulldowns and chin ups. Sometimes I'll throw in a band assist on chin ups. Obviously, at my weight they are not the easiest thing in the world to do. By changing the grip, you can hit different parts of the lats. A narrow grip will get more of the lower lats, while a wider grip hits more of the upper.

REVERSE HYPERS

Not only are these a great builder of the lower back, glutes, and hamstrings, but they also help to keep your back healthy by really stretching out the lower back. I do these both light for high reps and heavy as a strength builder.

Training Overview: Pressing Power

Along with my height comes long arms, so just like with the deadlift I am supposed to be a bad presser. Frankly, at the beginning of my strongman career, I was. But again, I didn't accept my fate on the overhead press, I got to work on becoming a great presser. It is crazy when I go back and look at some of my early pressing videos to see how far I have come. For instance, at my first World's Strongest Man competition in 2008 I struggled pressing a 300 pound axle for only a few reps with both arms. Now I have come very close to pressing that kind of weight with only one arm! Just let that sink in when you think about your weak areas and know that anything is possible with a good solid plan, consistent hard work, and the unstoppable desire to be great.



When I set out to build a world class overhead press, I knew that I needed to build some brute upper body strength. So I decided to set a day aside strictly devoted to strict pressing and building shoulder, chest, and triceps power. I include all of these on the same day in order to help with recovery. In strongman you can use leg drive on

overhead pressing, but I felt like my lower body strength was developing at a much faster rate than my upper body. With the awkwardness of strongman implements leg drive will only take you so far. At a certain point you will need to muscle up a lockout with shoulder and triceps strength. A lot of strongmen neglect chest training and don't do any form of benching, but this is a mistake. The chest, especially the upper pecs, are vital in the overhead press. For instance, on a log press you have to really lean back because of the size of the log. This really brings the upper chest into play. For this reason, I incorporate heavy incline work with dumbbells and a barbell. I simply don't want to have a weakness in any muscle group. With heavy bench work comes an overload on the triceps, which is why I incorporate close grip bench work into my training. For bench I utilize a narrow grip. A wider grip really beats up the shoulder, putting it at risk for injury. A narrow grip has much more carry over to strongman than a wide grip as well.

As far as my strict pressing movement, I rotate many different variations of exercises from different angles. For instance, one week I will do a standing strict press with a bar, the next week I might do seated pressing with chains or bands, and then standing strict press with chains the week after. By hitting the press in different ways the muscles are always stimulated and you are getting prepared in every way possible for the demands of strongman competitions.



Training Overview: Overhead Implement Training

Even though I have my strict pressing day on Tuesday, I still need training on the actual implements themselves. Each overhead event in strongman has its own challenges and you must be heavily trained on all of them. Saturday is the day I train with the implements. Rather than strict pressing on this day I train using my legs. If I have a contest coming up, I will train that specific overhead on Saturday. If I am not sure what will be in the contest, as is often the case going into World's Strongest Man, I will rotate a different implement each Saturday. For example one Saturday I will do log clean and press, the next week dumbbell clean and press, and the following week axle clean and press. This will keep me prepared no matter what is thrown at me.

Because the triceps and shoulders seem to recover pretty quickly, and because I am using more legs on Saturday, I feel like training the overhead twice a week is optimal. If you look at all of the great pressers in strongman, most are doing some kind of pressing more than once a week. Once I started training this way, my overhead began to shoot through the roof. I added layers of muscle to my shoulders, chest, and triceps. Through years of consistent hard work with this program, I have to say the overhead is now one of my biggest strengths. It went from being a weakness to hitting the following personal bests:

- Log Clean and press for reps – 440 lbs x 2 reps
- Axle clean and press – 451 lbs
- Dumbbell clean and press – 274 lbs x 6

Training Overview: Strongman Event Training

During the week I am focused on building strength. Saturday, however, is when I train the actual events themselves. There is no way around it, in order to become great at strongman, you have to train the events. The way I break it down is I usually have one overhead event, (log, axle or dumbbell) one moving event (yoke, farmer's or frame), and then train stones, and keg loading or sandbag loading. If I know what events are coming up in a contest, I will train for those specifically, but if not, I will simply rotate the events. So if I am doing yoke one week, the next I am doing farmer's. By rotating through these specific events, you are going to be ready for just about any contest. If I have an event in a contest that is not one of these three, something not typically seen in contests, I will throw it in for a few Saturdays in order to make sure I am proficient at it.

Three events on event day is the optimal amount to train. Any more than that and you end up not getting the proper amount of work on each event. By the time you get to the fourth or fifth event, you aren't really able to put in the amount of focus and effort needed in order to become better. The more events you train in one day, the more you start to eat into your recovery as well. Strongman events can really take a toll on your joints, spine, and central nervous system, so you want to be efficient when you are training them in order to still recover properly.

Not beating yourself up by training every event to failure, every strongman training day is something crucial I want to focus on. This is a chronic problem with both amateur and pro strongmen alike. You will be better off doing weights you are able to finish and getting better through repetition. For example, rather than doing a yoke you can barely walk with and having to drop 5 or 6 times and are unable to complete, you should do a weight you can have a good solid run with and finish the course. This is the way to get better. I understand the desire to test yourself. When everyone is training, the music is loud, and your adrenaline is pumping, it is easy to want to throw on a crazy weight and see what you can do. But this is not the way to become better. It is best to put a weight on you can do, get successful lifts and runs, and then in time add weight and make gradual gains. For a long time Americans were at the bottom of the strongman food chain, and I believe this is a big part of the reason why. Europeans would train progres-

sively and not go to failure every training day. On contest day they were more proficient with the events and faster. But Americans in training would tend to load a weight on the implement and do one all out set to failure. On contest day they would be beat up and ultimately didn't have enough work on the events themselves. Today, more strongmen are understanding this principle. Americans have gotten smarter with strongman event training and are now a big force on the world stage.

For my rep/set scheme on event days, I will progressively warm up and then have a specific goal I want to hit that day. If my goal on the day is a 900 frame carry for 50 feet down and back in under 20 seconds, I will do 2-3 warm up sets increasing weight, then hit my target weight. If I don't hit my target on the first set, I will come back and do another set. I will usually not do more than 2-3 sets per event.

The following are tips for the more common events in strongman. These are tips that I really wish were given to me from the start. Sometimes just a couple of technique changes can make an event go from feeling impossible to excelling at that event. There are too many strongman events and variations to cover all of them, but this is a very good start to events you will likely see in competition. The events covered are:

- Yoke
- Farmer's walk
- Dumbbell press
- Truck pull
- Log press
- Keg and Sandbag Loading
- Stones

YOKE

The first thing to get right on yoke is bar height, so take your time finding the right height. You want a height that will give you ground clearance but is not going to be a low pick up. This is absolutely crucial to get right. I personally feel like the best place for the bar is a low placement with a slight forward lean on the yoke. By doing this, I feel much more stable. A high bar placement can be tougher to stabilize. If you do a low bar placement, you will need to keep a good shelf with the rear delts and have

the elbows up a little higher. At the start, you will want to take shorter strides and build up to a good pace. As you move down the course, you can open up your stride a little while still maintaining a heel to toe step. The number one thing that causes athletes to drop a yoke is breathing. Learning the proper way to breathe on the yoke is absolutely crucial. Holding your breath on the yoke is a big mistake. When you hold your breath you are forced to eventually let that breath out, which causes your body to fold over when you exhale. This will throw off the whole run. Instead, learn how to maintain a big chest with small quick breaths. This will help keep the core stabilized and give you the oxygen you need. Hand placement should be mid to lower on the side bars of the yoke.



This will give you a better center of gravity. In regards to training the yoke, the name of the game is speed. Yoke is another area where I see strongmen beating themselves up going too heavy. The aim is to become as fast at yoke as possible. This is accomplished by doing speed runs with submaximal weights. There is no need to constantly test yourself on the yoke with weights that you can only stumble forward with for a few steps or take a minute to complete a full run. The exception to this is the Arnold Classic

where I must get my body used to insane weights over a short distance, but even the Arnold yoke is timed. The proper way to train yoke is to take a week and train speed runs with 70-80 percent contest weight with no belt. This will also really help build up the stabilizing muscles and the abdomen. The next week push it up to 90 percent or above and add the belt. Even with this heavier weight we want to work on speed.

LOG CLEAN AND PRESS

The log clean and press has been the most difficult event for me to become proficient at. I have become a good log presser over time through lots of trial and error and hard work. The first tip I would give on the log press is to chalk your shirt before you begin the lift. This will help keep the log from slipping and will help it to stay in the right spot. Take a slightly wider than shoulder width stance with your feet. You want to aggressively pull the log up into your lap and have it tight up against your body. Have your hands slightly rotated forward. Make sure to squat down with the log in your lap to give you some power on the clean. It is a mistake to try to clean the log from a standing up position. When you clean the log to your chest flex the upper back and keep the log up against the chest as you roll it up. The movement from the lap to the chest should be an explosive one. Once the log is on your chest, stay tight with the elbows slightly up.



I prefer to hold my breath once the log is cleaned. When I let go of my air, I lose a little power. Many people tend to not engage the glutes and hips on the log press, but both should be utilized on the press. In order to engage my hips on the press, I actually set my hips back similar to the way I would begin a squat. I then drive with my hips and glutes in addition to my quads and calves in order to drive the log up and overhead. The final portion is finished with the triceps. Over the years, I have tried different methods of getting a log overhead including jerking, push jerking, one motioning, etc. I always go back to push pressing the log. If you look at the best log pressers in the world the overwhelming majority push press logs. Of course there is always the exception, such as Misha Koklayev. However, he has trained the jerk his entire life and can therefore successfully transfer that technique into a log press. In general, the better technique is the push press. One motioning a log is an option if the log is lighter and you are a shorter athlete. At my height, I actually fatigue much more quickly with a one motion technique. Six foot eight inches tall is just too much distance to cover to be efficient in the long run with a one motion. If you are a shorter athlete and decide to try the one motion technique, make sure you are well trained on it in order to learn how to do it properly.

FARMER'S WALK

On the farmer's walk the first thing to do is make sure the handles are clean before you go. Previous competitors could leave sweat on the handles. It's best to pre-chalk the handles themselves to help with the grip. In regards to foot stance, you want your feet not too close together, but not too far apart. They should be set in a good power position. Incorporate your legs into the initial lift and not just back. Start off with smaller steps, then increase speed as you get into a groove. Grip straight down on the handles rather than cocking your wrist. This will help keep the handles in a fixed position rather than rolling in your hand. When you have to turn during farmer's walk, you should account for that early in the run. Be sure and round off the turn enough so that you don't have to make a sharp turn which will be much more difficult. A sharp turn will slow you down and could really cause the implements to spin around on you. Begin turning your wrists in the opposite direction of your turn in order to keep the implements from spinning too badly on you. Stay tight throughout your whole run. Stay in a straight line

keeping narrow steps so as to not bang into the implements. Stand up and keep your shoulders back.

DUMBBELL PRESS

I prefer Olympic weightlifting shoes because they give me a good base. Always remember to chalk your shoulder and back of the neck where the dumbbell will be positioned. Doing so will keep the dumbbell from slipping out of position, as you may start sweating in the middle of the event. You want to clean the dumbbell in the manner you would clean a kettlebell. In other words, you want to get a little swing between your legs to get some momentum. Thinking of this movement as more of a swing than a curl will help save some strength and energy. You want to clean the dumbbell to a place somewhere on the shoulder/upper back, but the exact place is more of an individual thing which will take some practice to find. Once it's on your shoulder, make sure your feet are in a good power position. You want them not too narrow but not too wide. Before you press, pick something to look at. It doesn't matter what it is. You want it right in front of you and up a little. This will help keep you focused and in position with your head looking straight ahead and locked in place. Take a breath in and drive quickly and hard with the legs. As you dip with the legs, you should keep the elbow in the same spot, not letting it dip. Letting the elbow itself move will throw off the whole press and get you out of the groove. As you are coming up, you should also drive the shoulder up into the dumbbell, almost like a shrug. Try to literally jump off the ground.

The dumbbell press is not so much a press, but actually more of a throw and catch. You should finish with a quick, snappy catching of the dumbbell. Something of great importance on the dumbbell is to train it with both arms. You may be weaker with one arm than the other so this will probably feel awkward at first, but you should suck it up and train it any-



Photo by Jason Breeze

way. In time, you will get stronger on both arms and this will give you the advantage in competition. Once one arm fatigues, you can simply switch to the other arm which will allow you to get more reps.

KEGS AND SANDBAG LOADING

The way I grab a keg is with both hands on the underside of the keg and carry it up close to my chest. This makes it a lot easier to hold onto the keg and also frees up the legs to run. When the keg is grabbed with a staggered grip with one hand on top and one on bottom, the legs are usually banging into the keg. This causes you to lean back more which fatigues the hamstrings rapidly. With lighter kegs, the goal is to be moving with the implement while still picking it up. In other words, you want to throw the keg up and already be stepping with it as you are catching it. The same is true with sand bags.



A mistake I see with sandbags is grabbing the sandbag in the middle. This is the slower way to pick up a sandbag off the ground. It causes you to not run as fast with the sandbag and also makes it more difficult to load this way. Always grab a sandbag on the sides and get it up into a high position. Whether you are loading sandbags or kegs, remember the name of the game is speed. Too often athletes are just walking with the implements. You should be moving as quickly as you can. This is true with the transition between implements as well. You should not casually stroll back to the next implement. Get back as quickly as you can. You should be close to a sprint. Even at my size, you will never see me slowly moving between imple-

Photo by Jason Breeze

ments. I am getting back to the implement quickly. Remember, loading medleys are timed and getting back quickly to the implement will shave off seconds in the medley. If you aren't conditioned enough to run between implements, then address that in your training. Pace yourself with the implements. Each training session go a little bit faster until you are able to go at a full sprint.

TRUCK PULL

Right off the bat I must say footwear is paramount. You can be the biggest, strongest truck puller out there, but if you have no grip with your shoes it won't matter. The wrong shoes will cause you to slip all over the place, which will keep you from applying any force with your legs. Invest in some good rock climbing shoes. These have a special rubber surface that grips like nothing else. My feet are too big for rock climbing shoes. So I had a pair of discus shoes custom made with the same rubber sole from rock climbing shoes. The proper placement of the harness is on the shoulders, not up on the waist. This will keep the tension on the shoulders allowing you to breathe as well. Pull all of the tension out of the rope before you get set up. Start with the knees bent and feet parallel to each other. Your arms should be out in front of you but keeping tension on the rope. On the initial pull drive the hips forward while pulling hard on the rope with your arms. Don't start taking steps with the feet until some momentum has been established. Maintain a straight line, taking small steps at the beginning. Keep your head down and focus only on the rope. It is very important to never look up to see how far you have to go at any time during the truck pull. Looking up will only slow you down and it won't help you in any way. Keep looking down and stay low. As you move down the course, you should begin to pick up hand and foot speed. If it is really light, take bigger steps. The main thing is to focus on the lead rope. Ultimately, you have to be willing to go through the pain barrier on truck pull. In fact, to be a good truck puller, you need to almost enjoy the pain of the truck pull. Simply keep driving until you get the job done. Never get wild with the truck. You must maintain your form throughout. If you start moving from side to side, you are not applying the same force and will lose speed. The way to get the right form down, like with everything else, is to train truck pull over and over again. If you don't have access to a truck, you can use a prowler, sled, or even a tire behind you. You can also use a car or smaller truck with someone

riding the break to make it more difficult. In my opinion, nothing trains the truck pull as well as a big truck, however, using those other items are better than not training it at all. One way to watch your technique and get better is by videoing yourself in training. See if you aren't quite as low as you thought you were or if you could have gotten more hip drive at the start. This attention to detail may only shave off a half a second, but that half a second could mean the difference between you winning or taking second. Also remember, you can train truck pull up to twice a week, and I often do. The truck pull is fairly easy on the joints and does not fatigue the CNS very much. All of your hard work will pay off. The truck pull will help with overall conditioning as well. If you are conditioned for the truck pull, you are usually conditioned for anything else thrown at you.



STONES

Stone lifting is my favorite event in strongman. Many consider it to be the signature event in strongman. Winning the stones is always huge bragging rights for any strongman, and it is also a good representation of overall body strength. I hold the world record stone load with a 550 pound stone to a 54 inch platform. My best in training is 2 reps with a 558 pound stone to 48 inches. I actually own a 629 pound stone that I have lapped and will hopefully load soon. For me, it has been of the utmost importance to be good at stones because many World's Strongest Man contests have been decided

on stones. I have won all 3 of my World's Strongest Man titles on the stones. It always seems to come down to me and Savickas to determine the WSM winner. Here are a few stone lifting tips that may help you win a big contest as well.



I lift stones with somewhat of a straight armed technique. This will really save some wear and tear on the biceps, as I think it is the safest way to lift a stone. Another determining factor in my technique is my height. If I were lifting with a bent arm, the distance I have to bend down to pick up the stone would increase even further. Remember to get your legs involved in the initial lift. I have rarely seen it done or taught on the stones, but really get the butt down and get some leg drive. Don't make stone lifting an all back lift. Utilizing the power of the legs will really help to lift the stones and save the back. Once the stone is off the ground, scoot the feet in while transitioning the stone onto your lap. This will help bring the stone into the right position and give you more power out of the lap. The transition with your feet needs to be relatively quick, especially with the lighter stones. This will take some training to get down right, so repetition is key. It is also good to train one motioning stones. It's not necessary to one motion every stone in a contest, but the time may come when one motioning, even the first stone in a series, could win the stones or even the whole contest for you. If two athletes are equally good at stone lifting, but one laps every stone and the other guy one motions the first stone or two, who will most likely have the faster time? The athlete who one motions. Which leads me into my next point on stones, have a game plan. I'll give you an example. I did a contest in Canada where I got to go last on the stones. No other

athlete had loaded the fifth and final stone. If I had gone sooner in the order, I would have one motioned the first few because they were light enough to do so. But since I knew I just needed to load the fifth stone to win, I lapped the first four in order to save my back for the last stone. I took my time and finished all 5 stones and won the event. Be aware of the points, your position in the order, and the weight of the stones in order to have a good plan of attack going into the stones. One motioning is quicker, but takes more out of your back. All of this must be taken into account.



Photo by Jason Breeze

Tacky is a crucial element of stone loading. Without tacky, you are not going to get the kind of grip on the stones you need, especially on heavier stones. I use Dave Ostlund's Elite Tacky. I believe it to be the best tacky out there. It consistently proves to provide the best grip. When the World's Strongest Man title has been on the line on the stones, I have gone with Elite and it has not let me down. To get an even better grip on stones, I also wear and recommend stone sleeves. I created my own, originally for personal use only, because I saw several competitors wearing them, but wanted to improve upon what I saw. So I bought some leather and other materials and began to work on my own sleeves. After some trial and error, I created some solid sleeves. Upon using them, it became obvious that my grip on stones was much improved. Many people began to ask where they could get a pair of the sleeves I was using, so I decided to make them and sell them to the public. You can get a pair of ShawStrength Stone Sleeves at ShawStrength.com. I think you will find the combination of ShawStrength Sleeves and Elite Tacky to be a winning combination for stones.

Training Overview: Conditioning

Depending on the events of an upcoming contest, I will do 2-3 days of conditioning during the week. If I am getting ready for something like the Arnold, I don't include it because the contest is more about static strength and not much conditioning is involved. However, if the contest has lots of medleys and events for reps, I will include the conditioning days. The type of conditioning I do is basically HIIT, or High Intensity Interval Training. I think this type of conditioning is best for strongman. Notice I said conditioning, rather than cardio. I will occasionally do some actual cardio in the 30-45 minutes range, but that is more for general overall health and not so much for strongman. As a whole, everything I do is centered on getting better at strongman. Strongman events typically last around 30 to 90 seconds, so I keep my conditioning in that range. For my conditioning I use the concept 2 rower, the ski erg, kettlebell bell swings and sometimes a prowler. I always use some kind of resistance, in order to get it as close to event conditioning as possible. Because my conditioning varies from contest to contest, I won't include conditioning in my detailed program later on in the book, but I do encourage it.

Training Overview: The Mental Aspects

I often get asked what I think about before a big lift, or if I do any mental visualization. I am always mentally preparing and visualizing. I am constantly putting myself mentally in the exact environment of the upcoming contest. I think about the sights, sounds, and smells of the event. I put myself mentally at the finals at World's or on the stage at the Arnold. I can even feel the lights. By the time I show up to the contest, I've already done that event in that environment so many times it becomes second nature. I already know what I am going to do and how I am going to do it. Every person will battle with doubts, and I am no exception. The key is to work through those doubts in training. Preparation breeds confidence. I even do visualizations throughout the day leading up to training. If I have a big deadlift training session at night, I am thinking about it the whole day leading up to it. I am putting myself in a position mentally to do exactly what I need to do in training.

You Have To Believe

It might sound played out and somewhat obvious, but you really have to believe in yourself. It does not matter if anyone else does, you must have an undying belief in your goals and your dreams. If you don't believe in your dreams, why even get started on them? You can't be wondering or half-heartedly hoping you can reach them. You must believe it 100 percent. Know, without question, you can do it. The same holds true for any particular lift in training or competition. Moving heavy weight requires extreme belief in yourself. Believe that you can and you will lift it. Convince yourself you can and you will do whatever the task is in front of you. The more you train and compete, the stronger this belief will become.



Psyching Up

The psyche-up process is something I have gradually had to work on. I have tried different methods to get myself pumped up for a big lift, but I have landed on one. What goes through my mind right before a big lift is simple. I am thinking about winning. I want to win very badly, and that alone is enough to psyche me up. Some people thrive off of hate or rage to get that big lift, but those things are not what gets me going. I simply want to show I am the strongest. I just want to be the best. There are certain times, if someone has said or done something to trigger me, when I am extra motivated, but ultimately it comes down to my extreme desire to win. When the desire for winning and greatness is at the forefront of my mind, I really get into a zone. Once I am in that zone, everything else fades away. The only thing that matters then is the implement in front of me. I am no longer phased by any other conditions. The crowd doesn't matter. The music playing doesn't matter. I have laser like focus on the task at hand. Don't let your mind be scattered in a million different places. Focus in so nothing else exists, just you and the implement in front of you.



Don't miss in training

One thing I cannot stress enough is that you do not want to miss lifts in training. There are times in training when I test myself and occasionally failed attempts happen. But I never make it a habit in my day to day training to miss. There is absolutely nothing gained physically or mentally from missing lifts in training. Missing will only break you down physically and put you in a bad place mentally. Always remember that training is for building strength, not constantly testing strength and beating your body up with failed attempts. I'd rather hit my sets and weights and leave a little in the tank than up the weight for no reason and fail. Consistently hitting your lifts creates a habit of success. This repeated pattern of success will carry itself over in competition. Failed lifts will happen from time to time, but avoid this as much as possible.

ShawStrength Gym – The Importance of a Training Crew

ShawStrength Gym is my private training center. It is not open to the public. It serves the singular purpose of helping me to be the best strength athlete on the planet. Many people have asked to come train at my gym, and the answer is rarely yes. This isn't due to some elitist mentality. It is solely based on the fact that it is a sacred place to me. Strongman is my passion, my life, and my job all rolled into one. Because of this, I am very picky about who I let enter those doors. I have spent lots of work, money, and time making my gym what it is today. We are striving for greatness in there, day in and day out. I won't compromise what the gym stands for by letting the wrong people in. If your training environment isn't what it needs to be to reach your goals, get out of there. Finding the right facility is crucial to achieving your goals. Early on, I realized the regular commercial gym wouldn't cut it for me. I needed a place where I could use chalk, scream when needed, crank up the music, and use all of my strongman equipment, so I made it happen. If you want it badly enough, you will find a way to do the same. Making a long drive, being in a cramped space, or even training alone is better than training in the wrong gym. Find a place where you can focus 100 percent on being great and reaching your goals.

I am a very self-motivated individual, so no matter what I would find a way to reach my goals. However, I believe achieving my goals has been made much easier with the help of a great training crew. The guys at ShawStrength gym are an essential part of my success. I have had a few different training partners throughout my career. Some have worked out, while others have not. The crew I train with now is great. The formula we follow at ShawStrength leads to success.

Things to look for in building a good training crew:

- **Positivity** – At ShawStrength, we have a rule. It doesn't matter who shows up when you are training, we cheer each other on. We push each other to strive for greatness. Whoever is going for a big lift, I am right there cheering him on and vice versa. If you come to my gym and don't cheer on whoever is up, I'll show you to the door. Why? Because we are building an atmosphere which breeds success. Nothing else is acceptable. If you are training with someone who is negative or doesn't contribute to your success in a positive way, it's time to find a

new training partner.

- **Consistency** – I would rather train alone than train with someone who is flaky. Training partners rely on each other for spotting, loading and unloading equipment, motivation, and many other things. If you can't count on your partner to consistently be there, getting into a training groove can be difficult to do.
- **Good Work Ethic** – We do our fair share of cutting up at ShawStrength, but when it's time to get to work, play time is over. I take what I do very seriously. If someone tries to demean that with laziness, they are stealing from the atmosphere of success we are constructing at ShawStrength.
- **Like-Minded** – Surround yourself with people who are on the same mission as you. At ShawStrength, everyone is committed to becoming the absolute best strength athlete they can be. Because of this, we can all thrive together. We push each other, learn from each other, and want each other to succeed. If your training partner isn't someone who will talk strategy, exchange training ideas, talk about the sport, and establish goals, it is simply not in your best interest to continue training with that person. It defeats the purpose of having a training partner if you can't be on the same page.
- **Get Along** – This may seem obvious, but if you are training with guys you don't actually like to be around, it will have a negative effect on your training. It shouldn't be a miserable experience. Training should be fun and beneficial to everyone in the training crew. The guys I train with are all good friends of mine. There is no animosity or negative vibes between us. Seek out those type of people to train with and say goodbye to anyone else.

Get into the right facility, with the right training partners. Build an environment that is conducive to being great. Watch yourself improve drastically.

The Last 2 Weeks Going Into a Meet

People often ask when is the right time to start cutting back on training going into a contest. I run a mock meet right at or very close to 100 percent contest weight, two weeks out from the competition. This seems to be enough time to rest and recover properly without losing any of the gains made in training. If you pull back too soon, like 3 or 4 weeks out from a meet, your body may not be prepared and conditioned for the weight of the contest. The weekend before the contest, I run through things at 60 to 70 percent. The goal is to do enough to get focused, while still leaving some in the tank. Don't get a whole lot of adrenaline going the weekend before. I am not a fan of taking off completely the final week leading into the competition. It causes the body to get stiff. Getting some blood flowing the week before a competition will aid with recovery going into the contest. I will go into the gym and do some light total body stuff until the final 2 to 3 days leading into the contest. During this time, I am getting treatment, stretching, doing contrast baths, and eating like crazy. This protocol causes me to always go into contests feeling my best.

Always Be Prepared

When it comes to competing, always be prepared. Be sure to bring your own equipment. It shocks me to see athletes arrive on game day without tacky, straps, correct shoes, or other vital things. Don't show up to a contest relying on someone else to have the equipment you need. Losing luggage from a flight is one



thing, but simply failing to bring the necessary gear to a competition is never a good idea. Not only will you be banking your contest on somebody else helping you out, but it is also a distraction. Wondering whether you are going to get tacky from someone or if truck pull shoes will be available in your size to borrow causes extra stress that can

be avoided with proper preparation. Not having the appropriate equipment can completely ruin an event and possibly even the whole competition for you. When packing for a competition, take time to think it through. Ask yourself questions relating to the contest's location and events. Will I be competing in a hot climate, causing me to need thicker tacky? Will I need to bring a different kind of shoe for a specific event? Then, load up on the essentials like chalk, straps, and sleeves. You will be more confident throughout the contest if you prepared ahead of time to have everything you need.

Recovery Methods and Prehab

I take my recovery and prehab very seriously. If you aren't recovering from training properly, you aren't moving forward. This is as big of a piece of the puzzle as anything. Many athletes pay close attention to training and nutrition, but slack when it comes to recovery and rehab. Honestly, it's not fun to stretch or get in a cold ice bath. But it is precisely those things that can be the difference in winning or losing. Attention to detail adds up over time. Being great means doing things others won't in order to reach your dreams and goals.

Sleep and nutrition are the two biggest factors in recovery, but there are a few other things I do to ensure that I am getting stronger and staying healthy.

Contrast Baths

Contrast baths are a tried and true method to increase recovery from intense training. They also help soothe aches, pains, and injuries. I do contrast baths 3 times a week. My recovery and the way my body feels overall is greatly improved by doing these regularly. At home I have a hot tub and a big plastic horse trough that I fill with cold water. I rotate between these for 4-5 minutes at a time and I always end on cold. Sometimes, if I am feeling really sore, I will do the cold bath only. I have found, from both research and experience, the perfect temperature for the cold baths is right around 48 degrees Fahrenheit. If you don't have access to a hot tub or cold bath, hot and cold showers will work as well. Again, always end on cold. Often times, I don't train until 7:45 p.m. which means on those nights my contrast baths aren't done until midnight. One of the great benefits to cold baths is the great sleep I have after taking one.

I am aware of the controversy about cold therapy or icing for injuries. Some say cold treatments are bad for the healing and recovery process. To this I say the proof is in the pudding. My recovery is sped up from cold treatments. When I incorporate them, I am always more ready for my next training session and I feel better overall. Sometimes things are good in theory, but when tested in the real world the theory doesn't seem to hold up. This proof is not only in my experience with cold treatments, but has also been proven with other world class athletes. I know many other top pro strongmen who rave about the benefits of ice therapy. Give it a try yourself to see the results.

Fascial Stretching

I am very thankful that I have come to know the benefits of fascial stretching. Since I have incorporated this kind of stretching into my program, my lower back pain is almost non-existent. My whole body has been much less prone to injury. Fascia is the thin web-like tissue covering and connecting our muscles and other organs. There is a difference in regular stretching and fascial stretching. Typical stretching isolates one muscle group, while fascial stretching hits more muscle groups, thereby stretching the fascia which connects those muscles together. It is important to find a reputable practitioner of fascial stretching. Not all who administer fascial stretching are effective at it. Do some research and ask around to find the best one in your area. When you do find someone who is competent, you won't regret it.



The ShawStrength Training Program – Putting It All Together

Now that we have gone in depth on every aspect of my training, it's time to map it out and put it all together. As you will see, the same workout is never done 2 weeks in a row. Some have described my type of training as controlled chaos training. I don't know if I would use that term myself, but I do believe in constantly mixing it up and forcing the body to accept new stimulus.

The following 4 week training is a typical 4 week cycle I would go through, but notice the almost endless variables that can be used from session to session. I may switch it up and go from a different height or use different resistance in another training cycle. Training is always evolving and adapting as I learn more about myself and prepare for the needs of different competitions. Nevertheless, this is a very accurate look at my overall training program. It is the way I and my training crew at ShawStrength have used week in and week out to get stronger and rise to the top of the strongman world.

Below is a list of some career highlights to date I have achieved using this training program. I think you will see how effective it is.

- 2015 Arnold Strongman Classic Brazil (1st)
- 2015 World's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2015 Arnold Strongman Classic Australia (1st)
- 2015 Arnold Strongman Classic (1st)
- 2014 Arnold Strongman Classic Brazil (2nd)
- 2014 Giants Live Sweden (1st)
- 2014 North America's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2014 Mid America's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2014 Warwick Strongman Competition (1st)
- 2014 Arnold Strongman Classic (2nd)
- 2014 World's Strongest Man (3rd)
- 2013 America's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2013 Arnold Strongman Classic Spain (1st)
- 2013 Arnold Strongman Classic Brazil (1st)
- 2013 Arnold Strongman Classic (2nd)

- 2013 World's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2012 World's Strongest Man (4th)
- 2012 Arnold Strongman Classic (4th)
- 2011 Jon Pall Sigmarsson Classic Iceland (1st)
- 2011 World's Strongest Man (1st)
- 2011 Liberty Classic (1st)
- 2011 Giants Live London (1st)
- 2011 Arnold Strongman Classic (1st)
- 2010 World Strongman Finals In Sweden (1st)
- 2010 Jon Pall Sigmarsson Classic Ireland (1st)
- 2010 Giants Live Turkey (2nd)
- 2010 World's Strongest Man South Africa (2nd)
- 2010 Liberty Classic (1st)
- 2010 Viking Power Challenge Norway (1st)
- 2010 World Strongman Super Series (2nd)
- 2010 Giants Live South Africa (1st)
- 2010 Arnold Strongman Classic (5th)
- 2009 Los Angeles Grand Prix (1st)
- 2009 Gothenburg Grand Prix (1st)
- 2009 World Strongman Super Series (1st)
- 2009 All-American Strongman Challenge (1st)
- 2009 Fortissimus (3rd)

- **Week 1**

- Monday: Legs

- 5-8 x 2-3 Safety Squat Bar (speed)
- 3 x 8-12 Safety Squat Bar Step Ups (each leg)
- 3 x 8-15 Leg Press (band tension)
- 3 x 15-20 Calf Raises on Leg Press
- 3 x 8-12 Glute Ham Raises

- Tuesday: Chest, Shoulders, and Triceps

- 5-8 x 3-8 Standing Barbell Military Press (chains)
- 3 x 8-12 Incline Dumbbell Bench Press
- 3 x 5-8 Floor Press with Swiss Bar (straight weight)
- 2 x 8-12 Dips (add weight if bodyweight isn't enough)
- 3 x 8-12 EZ Curl Bar Skullcrushers
- 3 x 8-12 Single Arm Cable Rope Pushdowns

- Wednesday: Off Day

- Thursday: Deadlifts and Back (effort)

- 5-8 x 1-5 Standard Height Deadlift (effort) (straight weight)
- 3-4 x 8-10 Suspended Chain Good Mornings (cambered bar)
- 3 x 8-12 Lat Pull Downs
- 3 x 8-12 Seated Cable Rows
- 3 x 20 Frame Shrugs
- 3 x 20 Face Pulls

- **Week 1, continued**

- Friday: Off Day
- Saturday: Event Training
 - Log Clean Once and Press for Reps – Clean the log once and press for sets of 5. So progressively do sets adding weight each set to work up to your top working set for the day. Use leg drive and work on your form.
 - Farmer’s Walk – warm up doing a few runs and then do 2-4 sets of between 20 and 25 meters for speed.
 - Atlas Stones – Stone over the bar for reps (a platform can be used as well) Working on technique do sets of 5 reps with progressively heavier stones working up to your top weight for the day. Pick a bar height or platform height from an upcoming contest but somewhere between 48”-54” is common to see.
- Sunday: Off Day

- **Week 2**
 - Monday: Legs
 - 5-8 x 2-5 Spider Bar Squats with Bands (effort)
 - 3 x 8-12 Power Squat Machine (added band tension)
 - 3 x 8-15 Iso-Lateral Strength Leg Press (straight weight) (each leg)
 - 3 x 15-20 Calf Raises on Strength Leg Press
 - 3 x 8-12 Inverse Leg Curls (Westside Barbell machine)
 - Tuesday: Chest, Shoulders, and Triceps
 - 5-8 x 3-8 Seated Barbell Military Press (bands)
 - 3 x 8-12 Incline Swiss Bar Press (straight weight)
 - 3 x 5-8 Close Grip Barbell Bench Press (bands)
 - 3x 8-12 Iso-Lateral Chest Press (each arm)
 - 3 x 8-12 Seated Overhead EZ Curl Tricep Extensions
 - 3 x 8-12 Cable Tricep Pressdowns
 - Wednesday: Off Day
 - Thursday: Deadlifts and Back
 - 5-8 x 1-3 Standard Height Deadlift (speed) (chains)
 - 3-5 x 10 Rack Pulls (bands)
 - 3 x 8-12 Pull Ups (add band for assistance to help if unable to complete all of the reps)
 - 3 x 8-12 Barbell Bent Over Rows
 - 3 x 8-12 Barbell Shrugs
 - 3 x 15-20 Face Pulls

- **Week 2, continued**

- Friday: Off Day
- Saturday: Event Training
 - Axle Clean and Press – Do sets of two reps (clean both reps) adding weight each set until you get to your top weight for the day. Try to push yourself hard here getting close to failure but try not to fail. Make smart weight increases and as the weight gets heavier make smaller weight increases.
 - Yoke – Do warm up sets working up to heavier weights each set. Add in a belt and work up to a heavier set of close to your max. Make sure that you can complete the run without any drops and work on trying to move as fast as possible with the heavier weight. Be smart and don't pick too heavy of a weight. Either pick a distance from an upcoming contest or do a run of 20 to 25 meters.
 - Sand Bag Carry and Load – If you have multiple implements you can set up a run of loading 3-4 sandbags. If you have a platform to load to that is the best but you can train this with no platform. Make sure to push yourself hard here and make the weights fairly challenging. If you only have one sandbag just carry it down, sprint back and forth, then pick it up and carry it back. Pick a distance around 40-50 feet.
- Sunday: Off Day

- **Week 3**
 - Monday: Legs
 - 5-8 x 2-5 Cambered Bar Squat with Chains (speed)
 - 3 x 8-12 Safety Squat Bar Step Ups (each leg)
 - 3 x 8-15 Leg Press (band tension)
 - 3 x 15-20 Calf Raises on Leg Press
 - 3 x 8-12 Glute Ham Raises
 - Tuesday: Chest, Shoulders, and Triceps
 - 5-8 x 3-8 Standing Military Press (straight weight)
 - 3 x 10 Bamboo Bar Standing Shoulder Press (weights suspended with bands)
 - 3 x 8-12 Incline with Swiss Bar (bands)
 - 3 x 5-8 Close Grip Floor Press with Axle (chains)
 - 3 x 8-12 Incline Skullcrusher with EZ Curl Bar
 - 3 x 8-12 JM Press with Dumbbells
 - Wednesday: Off Day
 - Thursday: Deadlifts and Back
 - 5-8 x 1-5 Deadlifts from the Floor with Bands (effort)
 - 3 x 8-10 Suspended Chain Good Mornings
 - 3 x 8-12 Lat Pull Downs with Different Attachment (palms facing, narrow grip)
 - 3 x 8-12 Barbell Rows
 - 3 x 20 Frame Shrugs
 - 3 x 15-20 Face Pulls

- **Week 3, continued**

- Friday: Off Day
- Saturday: Event Training
 - Dumbbell Clean and Press – Do sets of 10 reps with the dumbbell cleaning each rep. Rotate between using your right hand and left hand. Go up in weight each set working up to a top working set. If you have a big difference in strength from your right to your left hand you can work up and do a heavier set of 5 with your dominate hand but do another set with your weaker hand as well just with lighter weight.
 - Yoke – warm up doing a few runs and then do 2-4 sets of between 20 and 25 meters for speed.
 - Sandbag Load – Load a sandbag over a bar for 5 reps. Make sure the weight is challenging for you but not anything you can't handle. Do 3-5 sets of 5 reps.
- Sunday: Off Day

- **Week 4**
 - Monday: Legs
 - 5-8 x 2-5 Safety Squat Bar Front Squats with Straight Weight (effort)
 - 3 x 8-12 Power Squat Machine (straight weight)
 - 3 x 8-15 Iso-Lateral Hammer Strength Leg Press
 - 3 x 15-20 Calf Raises on Hammer Strength Leg Press
 - 3 x 8-12 Inverse Leg Curls (Westside Barbell machine)
 - Tuesday: Chest, Shoulders, and Triceps
 - 5-8 x 3-8 Seated Barbell Military Press (chains)
 - 3 x 8-12 Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Press
 - 3 x 8-12 Dumbbell Incline Press
 - 3 x 5-8 Close Grip Bench Press (straight weight)
 - 3 x 8-12 Dips (add weight if bodyweight is too easy)
 - 3 x 8-12 Cable Pressdowns with Straight Bar Attachment (use lat pull-down if weight stack is too light)
 - 3 x 8-12 Cable Rope Attachment Overhead Tricep Extensions
 - Wednesday: Off Day
 - Thursday: Deadlifts and Back
 - 5-8 x 1-3 Standard Height Deadlift with Bands (speed)
 - 3-5 x 10 Rack Pulls from Knee Height (straight weight)
 - 3 x 8-12 Pull Ups (add band for assistance if unable to complete all of the reps)
 - 3 x 8-12 Seated One Arm Cable Rows (each arm)
 - 3 x 8-12 Barbell Shrugs
 - 3 x 15-20 Face Pulls

- **Week 4, continued**

- Friday: Off Day
- Saturday: Event Training
 - Log Clean and Press – Work on adding more weight to this event and do sets of 3 reps but clean each rep.
 - Farmer’s Walk – Do warm up sets working up to heavier weights each set. Add in a belt and work up to a heavier set of close to your max. Make sure that you can complete the run without any drops and work on trying to move as fast as possible with the heavier weight. Be smart and don’t pick too heavy of a weight. Either pick a distance from an upcoming contest or do a run of 20 to 25 meters.
 - Atlas Stones – Pick a platform height of an upcoming contest or somewhere between 48”-54” to load to. Do sets of 2 with each stone and get up to the heaviest stone that you can load for two reps.
- Sunday: Off Day

Notes: This is just an outline of a training program. Depending on what contest is coming up there would be changes to almost all of the workouts to tailor it specifically to the upcoming competition. Make sure you are always analyzing your progress and trying to attack your weaknesses with training. It is always fun to train the things that we are great at, but to be the best you need to train the events you are the worst at.

ShawStrength Nutrition

The importance of nutrition in any athlete's life cannot be overstated. If you are training your butt off, but don't eat, you are literally wasting your time. I have always eaten for performance, but there was a time when I was not as disciplined as I am now. In the past, I would get plenty of calories, but things were more sporadic. I would go pick up something from a restaurant or cook some food when I felt like it. But I decided if I really wanted to be great, if I really wanted to strive for excellence, then I had to get a tighter grip on my nutrition. The worst thing for an athlete after a competition is to be able to look back and say, "I could have done this better or that better in my preparation." I don't want to have any regrets. Regrets lead to doubts about your ability. You know in the back of your mind when you didn't do everything you could have. I want to stack the deck in my favor as much as humanly possible. I want to show up more prepared than anybody else. This means getting nutrition dialed in. Being great means if I am on the road having my meals with me ready to go at all times.



The first time I really put it all together with my nutrition was in 2011. I realized it was time to prepare every meal, to not miss a single one. If I was going to be gone for the day, I needed to have my food prepped and ready to take with me. It is no coincidence my first World's title and my new eating discipline lined up with each other. I'm not

going to say it was easy. It wasn't at all. In fact, it was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but all of the pain and effort were worth it. I started to feel better in general. I noticed an increase in my recovery abilities and along with that, strength increases.

For someone with my size and training demands, there is a massive caloric requirement. Just maintaining my bodyweight is a challenge. I often tell people I have two full time jobs, strongman and eating. Mass moves mass, so I eat as much as I can. I eat for performance, plain and simple. I don't care about looking good. I don't care if my abs are showing. I eat to be the strongest human being on the face of the earth, whatever I end up looking like is beside the point to me. I'm not saying I want to be some fat ass, which is close to impossible with the way I train anyway, but I want a body built for brute power. If that means I'm not streamlined, then fine. In order to keep building mass and get stronger, I am eating upwards of 10 times a day and close to 10,000 calories a day. This is not the amount everyone should eat, but it is what works for me. No matter what your goals are, be more disciplined with your nutrition. You will see the difference.

Carbs

Many people adhere to the war on carbs mentality with their nutrition. If your main goal is to get as strong as possible, that route is simply not the best option. There is no way I could get the amount of calories or fuel I need to build mass and strength without plenty of carbs in my diet. When you are in serious training for strongman, your body needs the fuel.



Here is a look at some of my favorite carb sources:

- Rice – It's simple carbs, simple to make, and easy to take with you if need be. 4-5 of my meals during the day include rice.
- Pasta – This is one of my favorite sources for complex carbs. This is because it is a great source for fuel and also I just really like pasta. Making pasta with red sauce is my favorite way to prepare it. I know it is now common to stay away from gluten, but I have never experienced any problems with it. Pasta is a staple in my nutrition.
- Baked potato – A great starch. Potatoes have always been and will always be a go-to for putting on strength and size. I love my meat and potato meals.
- Fruit – A great source of carbs. To get a proper balance in my nutrition, I eat a piece of fruit with several meals throughout the day. This will also provide antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals which are crucial for recovery. This can be any fruit really, bananas, strawberries, pineapples, you get the point.

Protein

Just like my carbs sources, my protein intake comes from a variety of foods throughout the day. Protein is crucial in the rebuilding process. For muscles to recover from training, protein synthesis must occur. Here is a look at my protein sources:

- Meat – I have never been a guy who could eat the same thing every single meal, I need some variety. So to stay sane with my nutrition, I mix it up with chicken, salmon, beef, turkey, and buffalo. Get organic free range meat if possible.
- Eggs – I love eggs for breakfast. I eat the whole egg, not just the egg whites. Leaving out the yolk also means leaving out lots of good vitamins, minerals, and protein. It has not been shown that the cholesterol in eggs causes any problems with your body's own cholesterol levels. If you can, get free range eggs.
- Protein shakes – A quick easy way to get protein. I have always relied on shakes to get the protein I need throughout the day. I'll go into more detail about what kind in the supplement section.

Fat

An important part of any balanced nutrition plan, especially for athletes, is fat. The right kind of fats help regulate hormones, decrease inflammation, and help get the calories I need on a daily basis. Here are some of my favorite sources of fats:

- Eggs – Along with the protein these bring, free range eggs bring in healthy omega 3 fatty acids.
- Olive oil – Olive oil is loaded with healthy fats. I usually mix this in with a shake.
- Peanut butter – Peanut butter is an easy, tasty way to get the fats and calories I need.
- Salmon – Salmon is packed with both protein and healthy fats.

Supplements

Supplements are just that, a supplement to an already good nutrition plan. The right supplements can really compliment a good meal plan and ensure all of your nutrition needs are met.

- Shakes – I am a big fan of weight gainer shakes, and I usually drink two a day. A good weight gainer should have protein, carbs, and fat sources. It would be much more difficult to get my daily calories without weight gainer shakes. When I am on the road traveling, they are a life saver. Before bed, I prefer a casein protein powder. This slow digesting protein is like having an IV drip of protein throughout the night as I sleep.
- Multivitamin – I take a multivitamin every day with breakfast. When I am in training, I don't want to have any deficiencies, a multivitamin helps to keep that from happening. In a perfect world, the food alone would ensure we have all the vitamins and minerals we need, but that is not realistic. I take the multivitamin so I don't have to worry about it.
- Pre workout – I use a caffeine based pre-workout to help me blast through the grueling training sessions at ShawStrength. There are many pre-workouts on the market. Use whatever gets you amped up for your training, be it coffee or anything else.

- Post workout – The first thing I do post workout is get a protein drink and some carbs. This helps to shuttle protein into the muscles extremely fast so the protein synthesis process begins and my muscles can begin repairing themselves. This is crucial because the repair process is what helps the muscles become stronger.

Here is how all of this breaks down. Unless you are 6 foot 8 and over 400 pounds, this much food is not for you. Scale it back to meet your needs. This is a well-balanced meal plan that is great for packing on muscle, gaining strength, and helping with recovery. The following is my daily meal plan:

Meal 1:

- 6 whole omega 3 eggs
- 4 scoops weight gainer shake
- Multivitamin

Meal 2:

- 10 oz. chicken breast
- 1 cup cooked white rice
- 1 baked potato
- 1 piece of fruit

Meal 3:

- 12 oz. lean beef
- 1 cup cooked white rice
- 1 piece of fruit

Meal 4:

- 12 oz. lean beef
- 8 oz. regular pasta with red sauce
- 1 piece of fruit

Meal 5:

- 12 oz. lean beef
- 1 cup cooked white rice
- 1 baked potato

Meal 6:

- Pre-Workout

Meal 7:

Protein and Carb Drink

Meal 8:

4 scoops Weight Gainer shake

2 Tbsp. olive oil

2 Tbsp. peanut butter

Meal 9:

10 oz. salmon/buffalo

2 cups cooked white rice

1 piece of fruit

Meal 10:

1 scoop Casein Protein

Examine your diet to see if you are doing everything you can to be great with your nutrition. It's not enough to just train hard. The body repairs itself with the food given to it. Strive for excellence with meal preparation. Remember, it is the small things that add up over time.

Conclusion

Well there you have it. You have my story, my life motto, my mental approach, event tips, my training plan, and my nutrition plan. I hope the contents of the book help you out in your journey, whatever it may be. I had so much help along the way to reaching my goals that I am happy to hopefully help you as you go after your goals. Go after them with everything you have, work hard, believe in yourself, and strive for excellence. BE GREAT!

~Brian Shaw