

# The Roark Report

## John Terpak: 1912-1993

**Born: 5 July 1912 in Mayfield, Pennsylvania.**

**Died: 1 June 1993 at 2:42 a.m., at York, Pennsylvania. Buried: 4 June 1993.**

**Married: Mildred Louis Bulk Son: John B. Terpak, Jr. Daughter: Joan Plitt.**

**Four Grand-Children; One Great-Grandson.**

**Met Bob Hoffman in 1935 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.**

John Terpak's life was one of continuous self-improvement. Even before he won the first *Strength & Health* magazine self-improvement contest in February, 1936, he had been improving. Competing in the 1934 Junior National Weightlifting championships, his eighth place finish in the 148 pound class was 281 pounds behind winner John Terlazzo's total. By the time of the 1935 Junior Nationals, Terpak won the 148 pound class and totaled 275 pounds more than the previous year. Of course, much of that was due to a successful two arm clean and jerk in 1935. He had missed all his clean and jerks the year before. Nonetheless, Terpak was setting a pattern of succeeding over previous attempts.

This year—1993—at the National Weightlifting Championships in Peoria, Illinois, Terpak was recognized for participating in sixty consecutive national championships. He won those nationals twelve times, and one span—from 1936 to 1945—was a literal decade of victory. Then in 1946 he placed second. The following year he won again. At subsequent Nationals, he was a spectator, a judge, or a coach. He also served in whatever non-spotlighted functions were needed. During Terpak's lifting career, he participated in three

bodyweight classes: 148, 165 and 181. The accompanying chart provides the details, and while not comprehensive, it does indicate the magnitude of his involvement with our sport. Take note of his lifting at the World Championships and in the Olympic Games.

Life changed over the decades for John. He went from living in a "Thirty-five dollar, five room apartment," to much better quarters. He evolved from champion lifter to businessman and executive with the York Barbell Company. When he was recognized this year in Peoria, one noticed his absolutely squared shoulders, his head held high and his determined walk. He was not a man who had lost his physique. Even at eighty, his demeanor was not diminished. When, only a handful of weeks after I saw him in Peoria, I learned of his death on 1 June 1993, it somehow seemed fitting that his life ended abruptly, rather than decliningly. He seemed to be full of life. Then died.

It was no easy task to be involved in our sport, with all the different aspects and federations and organizations and business competitions, and remain a survivor for more than half a century. John Terpak did it.

### References to Terpak's lifting career may be found in:

"American records—Terpak," *Lifting News* (April 1967): 13.  
 "American records—Terpak," *Lifting News* (March 1968): 8.  
 "John Terpak: Newest Lifting Sensation," *Strength & Health* (October 1935): 18.  
 "He Wins Self Improvement Contest," *Strength & Health* (February 1936): 7.  
 "Cartoonish Profile," *Strength & Health* (October 1939): 13.  
 "John Terpak," *Strength & Health* (May 1940): 29.  
 "Paragraph of Facts," *Strength & Health* (March 1941): 37.

John's byline appeared on the following articles in *Strength & Health*. Between April 1964 and October 1966 a series of athlete profiles ran each month called "Lifter's Comer." [Ed note: Few of these articles were actually written by Terpak.]

"Lifting Around America," *S & H* (October 1941): 18.  
 "Lifting Around America," *S & H* (November 1941): 12.  
 "The Christiani Family," *S & H* (November 1943): 28.  
 "Turning Handicapped Rookies Into Fighting Men," *S & H* (January 1944): 28.

"Fred Thompson: Self Improvement Winner," *S & H* (February 1944): 22.  
 "You Can Improve Your Athletic Ability," *S & H* (June 1944): 24.  
 "Clarence Ross: Mr. America 1945," *S & H* (August 1945): 17.  
 "Those Russians!," *S & H* (January 1947): 14.  
 "South of the Border," *S & H* (May 1951): 30.  
 [As told by John Davis,] "Training for the Press," *S & H* (May 1952): 10.  
 [As told by John Davis,] "Training for the Snatch," *S & H* (June 1952): 9.  
 [As told by John Davis,] "Training for the Clean & Jerk," *S & H* (July 1952): 9.  
 "Dietrich Wortman: In Memoriam," *S & H* (January 1953): 37.  
 [With six co-authors] "So You Want to be a Weightlifter," *S & H* (August 1962): 15.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Tony Garcy," *S & H* (April 1964): 24.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Joe Dube," *S & H* (May 1964): 24.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Norbert Schemansky," *S & H* (June 1964): 28.  
 "Lifter's Comer Bill March," *S & H* (July 1964): 28.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Gary Cleveland," *S & H* (August 1964): 50.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Louis Riecke," *S & H* (September 1964): 22.

# The Lifting Career of John Terpak

Date	Contest & Place	One-Hand Snatch	One-Hand Jerk	Press	Snatch	Clean and Jerk	Total
1934	UNKNOWN CONTEST:			175	175	225	575
1934	JR. NATIONALS: 8TH @ 148	126.5	143	176	187	0	632.5
1935	MIDDLE ATLANTIC:			180	180	230	590
1935	JR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 148	143	165	181.5	181.5	236.5	907.5
1935	SR. NATIONALS: 4TH @ 148	154	170.5	192.5	181.5	253	952
1935	TWO WEEKS LATER:			200	200	260	660
1935	ONE WEEK LATER:			205	210	0	410
1935	YORK v. TORONTO: AUG 4			208	208	263	679
1935	CANADIAN NAT'S: 1ST @ 148			205	215	260	680
1935	OLIPHANT v. YORK:			210	210	265	685
1936	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 148			220	220	297	737
1936	OLYMPICS: 5TH @ 148			214.5	220	275	709.5
1937	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			235	245	325	805
1937	WORLDS: 1ST @ 165			225.25	242	308	775.5
1938	MID-ATLANTIC: 1ST @ 181			235	260	320	815
1938	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			235	250	300	785
1938	WORLDS: 3RD @ 165			231	247.5	308	786.5
1939	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			235	240	325	800
1940	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			240	235	325	800
1940	INTERNAT'L CUP: 1ST @ 165			240	255	330	825
1940	NYC INVITATIONAL:			250	250	310	810
1940	QUALIFIED FOR OLYMPICS: GAMES NOT HELD DUE TO WAR						
1941	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			245	250	320	815
1942	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			240	245	315	800
1943	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 181			245	245	310	800
1944	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			250	250	330	830
1945	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			245	230	300	775
1946	SR. NATIONALS: 2ND @ 165			247	252	317	816
1946	WORLDS: 2ND @ 165			248	253.5	325	826.75
1947	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 181			250	260	330	840
1947	WORLDS: 1ST @ 181			253.5	264.5	336.25	854.25
1948	SR. NATIONALS: 2ND @ 165			255	250	295	800
1948	OLYMPICS: 4TH @ 165			226	226	297.5	749.5

**John Terpak was part of nine Olympic teams. He served as coach of the United States team in 1968—Mexico City—and in 1972—Munich. In 1986, in Moscow, he was head referee in the 220) pound class at the Goodwill Games.**

"Lifter's Comer: Gray Hanson," *S & H* (October 1964): 22.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Joe Puleo," *S & H* (November 1964): 32.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Isaac Berger," *S & H* (December 1964): 38.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Tommy Kono," *S & H* (January 1965): 38.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Jim Dorn," *S & H* (February 1965): 38.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Geza Toth," *S & H* (March 1965): 36.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Lee Phillips," *S & H* (April 1965): 38.  
 "Backstage Warm-up," *S & H* (May 1&5): 26.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Imre Foldi," *S & H* (May 1965): 46.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Bob Bednarski," *S & H* (June 1965): 32.  
 [As told by Tommy Kono,] "The Golden Straps," *S & H* (June 1965): 48.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Mihaly Huszka," *S & H* (July 1965): 28.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Pierre St. Jean," *S & H* (August 1965): 30.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Leonid Zhabotinsky," *S & H* (September 1965): 46.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Bob Bartholomew," *S & H* (October 1965): 46.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Karoly Ecses," *S & H* (November 1965): 44.

"Lifter's Comer: Walter Imahara," *S & H* (December 1965): 44.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Arpad Nemessanyi," *S & H* (January 1966): 44.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Gary Gubner," *S & H* (February 1966): 36.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Kailajarvi Brothers," *S & H* (March 1966): 34.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Rudy Plukfelder," *S & H* (April 1966): 34.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Jerry Ferrelli," *S & H* (May 1966): 42.  
 "Lifter's Comer: George Pickett," *S & H* (June 1966): 34.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Barry Whitcomb," *S & H* (July 1966): 30.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Homer Brannum," *S & H* (August 1966): 30.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Phil Grippaldi," *S & H* (September 1966): 30.  
 "Lifter's Comer: Norman Rauch," *S & H* (October 1966): 30.  
 "A Message from the AAU National Weightlifting Chairman," *S & H* (July 1968): 50.  
 "National AAU Weightlifting Committee Report," *S & H* (February 1972): 19.  
 "Editorial: *S & H* Magazine is Ending," *S & H* (May 1986): 5.

—Joe Roark