



# IRONCLAD

## THE IMPENDING DISCONNECT

*An Opinion/Prediction*

**Joe Roark**

Ed Note: We are delighted to welcome Joe Roark back to the pages of *Iron Game History* with his new column

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John Grimek knows the feel of being given false credit. Asked by an acquaintance if John remembered freeing him from jail by bending the bars for the man to slip through, John knows it did not happen, but he also knows this man is convinced it did. If that man were a writer with access to some of the current muscle/strength publications, one wonders if that story would see print as true . . . And if John endorsed the tale? Legions of his loyal fans would rush to second his motion, and anyone hinting at doubt would be branded a heretic. When John, and Vic Boff and the few others who span the first-hand-knowledge-bridge between old and new strength tales are no longer with us, the bars captivating correct literature may be bent, and many yarns may be woven into the current fabric of our sport.

Will it become folly without filters? As newer versions of older situations are written, unless researched thoroughly, the iron game's record keeping may fizzle. And as these newer versions become the only record that modern readers can acquire, errors will compound, with even newer versions being based upon them. It is time someone challenged the inaccuracies that are sprinkled among the literature in our field. In my *Flex* magazine column *Factoids*, some errors have appeared, and readers are quick to point these out to me. A photo purportedly of Larry Pacifico, was not Larry; on another occasion I had an incorrect zip code in my column. To those correcting, thank you. Proofreading your own work is arduous, because you are re-reading with assumptions. When Dorian Yates won the Mr. Olympia in Helsinki, *Factoids* told you it was in Atlanta. I knew better! I don't like the taste of

crow, but I like the feel of attentive readers. My response was not anger at being corrected; my response was triple checking what was submitted to *Flex*.

So Jan and Terry accepted my idea for a column to be called "Ironclad," which would become a watchdog for mistakes. An error is an error, whether from me or from you. So let's not take being corrected as a personal affront—unless you think you are perfect! Being a watchdog is not a popular role; it implies a superior position, perhaps arrogance. It is a role I have resisted for three years, but the accumulation of mistakes must not remain unchallenged by those who truly appreciate our history and those wonderful participants who deserve to be accurately remembered. And keep in mind, the true arrogance lies with those who further the lies by allowing the historic record to be altered.

There are two ingredients to maintaining historical continuity: 1. Understanding original terms and maintaining the definitions used, 2. Knowledge of comparative strength among the various lifts. This is of supreme importance.

*Original terms:* The noun 'press' begs for a modifier: bent press, military press, bench press, one arm press, etc. Originally the military press, for example, was performed with heels together and weight pressed overhead following the pace of the judge's hand rising. This method thwarted back-bending since the rising hand could not be seen if you were leaning back. So to compare those early military presses with modern presses starts with immediate error. Of course, the disintegration of the military style into a completely different lit? caused its elimination from

competition.

*Comparative Strength Knowledge*: January 17, 1983 will always remain a dark day for me. David P. Willoughby died exactly two months short of becoming age 83. (I had written three months short, then I checked my files.) With him died his attention to detail. Willoughby should be the first iron historian in every related Hall of Fame. But there is one practice David followed which, in those days when red and white muscle fiber activity was not understood, allowed for some wrong assumptions. Just as one would not predict that because a sprinter can run 100 meters in ten seconds it follows that he can maintain that pace for a mile run, so David's fondness for transcribing single rep lifts into predicted multi-rep lifts, did not and does not follow. If you can bench press 400 pounds one rep, it does not mean you can bench press 300 for any predictable number of reps. Indeed, if you gather a dozen lifters whose one rep max is 400, do you believe all of them will conclude with the same number of reps with 300? Why not? The picture is more out of focus when transcending lifts: comparing the bench press to the military press for example. However, comparative lifting knowledge can be helpful.

Comparative anthropometric knowledge can be helpful, too. This knowledge would go far to eradicate the most glaring errors in bodypart measurements. I have written about this through the years, as have others. It almost seems as if exaggerated measurements are simply a staple of bodybuilding magazines, something expected. How many times have you read that a 5'10", 210 pound man—whose arms do not appear to be particularly large—has a biceps measurement of over 20"? One of the most frustrating aspects of this whole business is that more often than not the writer of the article in which the inflated measurement is given does not challenge the measurement. In fact, the writer usually just lists the measurement, not even covering himself by stating that the measurement has been given to him by the bodybuilder.

Through the years, certain famous bogus measurements continue to turn up in the oddest places. In a recent *Milo* magazine, for example, an article by Eric Murray gives Louis Cyr credit for a 28" calf. Twenty-eight inches! Murray had taken a trip to Quebec to view various pieces of Cyr memorabilia, and the article is accompanied by a photo of Murray standing beside a slightly larger than lifesize statue of Cyr. While Cyr's fame as one of the all-time marvels of the iron game—fame for both his strength and his prodigious body—his calf was not 28" in circumference. Not close. Murray also gives Cyr credit for a 350 pound one hand press, a 24" upper arm, and a 36" thigh. None of these figures is correct; all are significantly exaggerated. But not one of the three comes close to the preposterous 28" calf. But

where did such a measurement arise? Those familiar with George F. Jowett's book on Cyr will perhaps remember being amused therein by the claim of a 28" calf for Cyr. More recently, Ben Weider's book about Cyr continues the error. But what a breath of fresh air it would be if, in an article such as Murray's, which was very interesting and informative, would simply take note of the inflated measurements. But the story of the 28" calf helps to make my point. And unless people who are interested in accuracy are wary of accepting obviously bogus claims on face value we will continue to see assertions that do no one any good.

Deliberate deception continues to be a problem. Too many wraps in powerlifting, weights that are not officially weighed, weights that are brought with the lifter and not allowed to be touched by anyone else. No reason for suspicion there! Imagine Mark McGwire bringing a special bat to a baseball game and refusing to allow it to be examined! Do you think any hits or homers he achieved that day would be part of the stat book? And the divisions: in powerlifting, so many acronyms, so much acrimony, in bodybuilding, drugs vs natural. Women's competitions—physique, figure, fitness. While categories are needed for specification of competition, subdivision in those categories seems to divide us. Our sport is more fragmented than a teacup in the hands of John Brookfield.

It amazes me—and amazes is the correct word—that even those in positions of power and influence in our field do not read their competitors' publications. One must know the product line of a competitor to better field one's own product. Certainly these key players have the facilities to read the other magazines—unlike the average reader who may only be able to afford one or two mags each month. Indeed there seems to be an arrogance against the "glossies," as the nationally distributed muscle magazines are called. So, truth appears on only cheap paper? Those same critics praise Randy Strossen's *Milo* publication, which is printed on "glossy" paper. Indeed, some of the newsletters are now reprinting old muscle mag articles from Weider's former magazines—that's okay, I guess, because in those days, Joe couldn't afford glossy paper. What kind of paper is used by the *Star* and the *National Inquirer*? Or the *New York Times*? The medium is *not* the message!

Most of the publications I read in the iron field contain small merit. Most of them I continue to read simply to follow the trace placed on certain subjects in my personal investigations. Readers are invited to submit examples of what are perceived to be errors. Let's get a dialogue going, and the record bent back to straight.

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