



IRON GAME HISTORY



THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Volume 9 Number 1

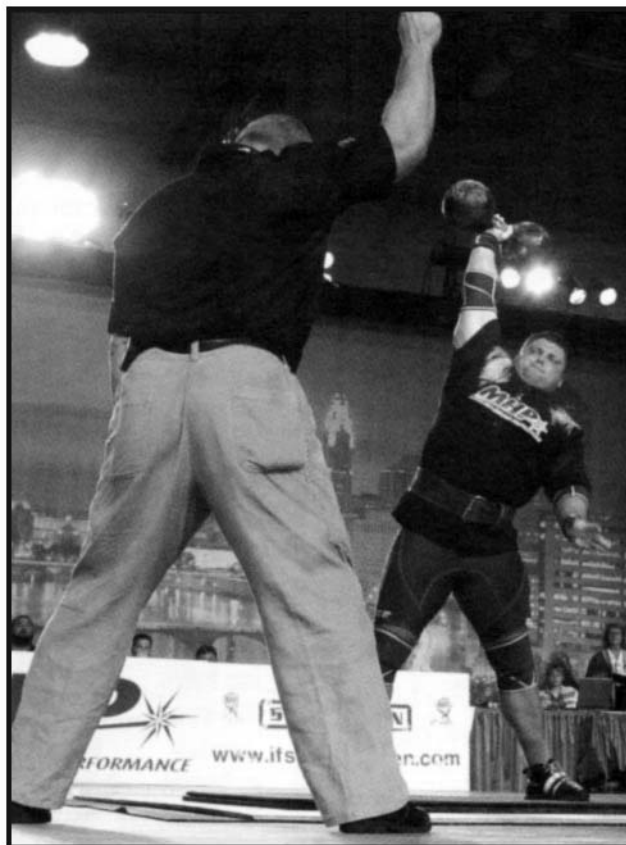
August 2005

The Arnold Strongman Classic

In early March of 2005 the fourth annual Strongman Classic was held in Columbus, Ohio as one of the fifteen sporting events comprising the gigantic sports festival now known as the Arnold Fitness Weekend. The 2002 and 2003 versions featured four events, the 2004 version featured five events, and the 2005 version added a sixth event. The 2005 competition took two days, involved ten athletes, and featured three events on each of those two days. The aim of this annual competition, from the beginning, has been to design a series of events which—taken together—provide a way to determine a man's overall strength. Those of us responsible for the choice of events—David Webster, Bill Kazmaier, Jan Todd, and myself—have done our best to create events that would allow the top performers in weightlifting, powerlifting, and the "strongman" sport to have an equal chance of winning.

Mark Henry won the

contest in 2002, but in 2003 and 2004, the contest has been dominated by Zydrunas Savickas, the powerful young Lithuanian giant who has gotten stronger each year. Broad, tall, and athletic, the 6'3", 375 pound Savickas is ideally constructed for events which require a combination of brute strength and power. We have done our best to limit the importance of endurance in our competitions, as our intention has been, and remains, to determine which athlete has the best claim to the mythical title of "The Strongest Man in the World." We realize, of course, that the winner of our contest—or any other such contest, for that matter—will face counter-claims from other men and other contests, but we nonetheless accepted the challenge given to us five years ago by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jim Lorimer to put together a contest and a group of strength athletes that would help the iron game come closer to answering the question



Referee Odd Haugen calls the count as Lithuania's Zydrunas Savickas lifted the Inch Dumbbell overhead seven times at the 2005 Arnold Strongman Classic on his way to winning his third consecutive title.

of who is the Strongest Man in the World. Every year we have made sincere efforts to include the very best men from the strongman sport as well as from powerlifting and weightlifting. One of our regrets is that the world's best weightlifters have as yet been unwilling to compete for the winner's share—a total prize package that this year approached \$100,000. Many top powerlifters, on the other hand, have been more than willing to accept the challenge. The same can be said for most of the major players in the strongman sport—who seem always ready for a contest of strength no matter how hard or how heavy. Next year, however, we hope that the champions from powerlifting and the strongman world will be

joined by one or more of weightlifting's leading super-heavyweights.

In past issues of *Iron Game History* we've provided details of the equipment and the rules for most of the six events we used this past spring. Because of that, this account of the 2005 contest will concentrate on details about the equipment and rules of the new events. As we have always done, we began the 2005 Arnold Strongman Classic with one of our favorite events.

Apollon's Wheels

It was gratifying to us that this year each of our ten great athletes was able to at least shoulder the awk-



As crew chief Steve Slater looks on, World Powerlifting Champion Brian Siders gets ready for his first try at the special Ivanko-made copy of Apollon's Wheels used each year at the Arnold Strongman Classic. Siders, who'd never tried the event before, managed to lift the massive bar from floor to overhead five times.

ward, 366 pound non-revolving barbell with the almost-two-inch-thick handle—a barbell that was made to closely resemble the railway wheels made famous by one of history's premier professional strongmen, Louis "Apollon" Uni. As we have done before, we awarded placings in this event based on how many times a man can lift the Wheels to his shoulders and then put them overhead—in any style—during the two minutes we allot to each man. We do give more points to the men who are able to bring the weight to the shoulders in one movement, because to "clean" this brutish implement requires prodigious strength. One man who cleaned the Wheels twice was Norway's Svend Karlsen—the veteran strongman who finished second in our competition in 2002, 2003, and 2004. This year Svend put the Wheels overhead three times, and cleaned them on two of his three repetitions, using the reverse-grip technique made

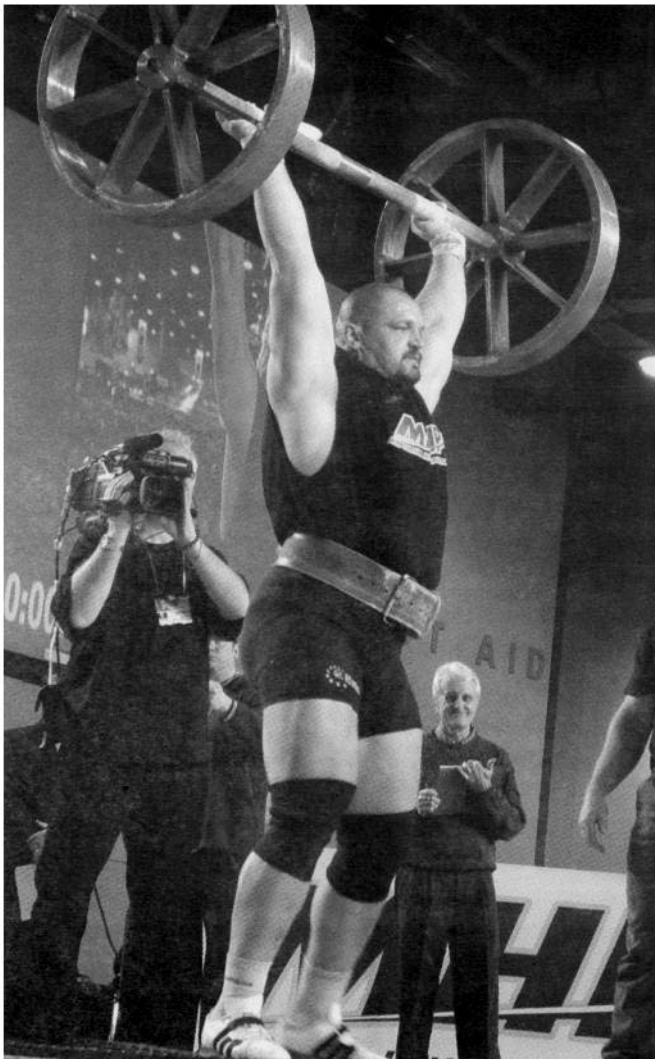
famous by John Davis when he cleaned and jerked them in France in 1949.

Another worthy performer was the 6'1", 400-plus pound Glenn Ross from Ireland, whose level of pure brute strength has few, if any, equals in the world. Glenn—"The Daddy" to all who know him—used an unusual, and strength-sapping, technique to bring the Wheels to his shoulders, but once he got them there he didn't need his legs to elevate the weight. To shoulder the weight Glenn used a reverse grip, and as he pulled the Wheels past his mid-section he released the "curling" grip on his left-hand side and then caught the bar in the crook of his left arm as he brought the bar to shoulder height with his pronated right hand. From there, he boosted the bar to his left shoulder in a series of movements, and then awkwardly worked his left hand under the bar and into a pre-pressing position. Then up went the Wheels. On his third rep, Glenn lost his balance as the Wheels were going overhead, but he dropped the bar, horsed it up to his shoulders again and pressed it solidly for his third rep.

Newcomer Brian Siders—the reigning super-heavyweight king of the International Powerlifting Federation—exploded all the arguments we heard before the show to the effect that he would be "out of his depth" in this contest. As it turned out, Brian's power still hasn't been completely plumbed. Veteran observers were flabbergasted by his performance. For example, England's Jamie Reeves, former winner of the "World's Strongest Man" contest and current tv commentator for this event, said Brian's pure strength was so great that at times it appeared "freakish." With Apollon's Wheels, Brian used a standard, two-movement "Continental" technique to bring them to his shoulders, and then pressed them so easily that many seasoned observers literally gasped in amazement. And he continued rep after rep, until he had done five—which matched the record set last year when Zydrunas Savickas elevated the Wheels five times.

The Ukraine's 6'4", 340 pound Vasyly Virastyuk—having won the 2004 version of TV's "World's Strongest Man" contest—came to Columbus with the firm intention of dethroning Savickas. He had fire in his eye as he leapt up the stairs on his 36" thighs to confront the Wheels, and after a shaky start he wound up putting the bar overhead successfully five times, with two of the reps coming after a reverse-grip "clean" rather than a "continental."

The last man out in this event was determined



Ukrainian giant Vasyi Virastyuk attacked the Apollon's Wheel event with great ferocity under the watchful eye of judge John Fair. Virastyuk, winner of the 2004 TWI "World's Strongest Man" contest and a former shotputter, managed five reps with the 366-pound barbell.

by the drawing of straws, and fittingly enough that man was the defending champion, Zydrunas Savickas. He approached the bar with his usual non-theatrical demeanor, and with his eye always on the clock made six easy "continentals" and six easier push-presses. He did each of these with such minimal knee action that they looked like a pure military press compared to some of the things that were seen in the days before the press was eliminated from weightlifting in 1973. Savickas is so strong in his shoulders that the weight—as it did in Siders' hands—looked like a wooden toy for most of the reps. After this majestic performance the rest of the athletes knew Savickas would be difficult, if not impossible,

to catch. (It is interesting to note that we have had a steady improvement every year in the Wheels event; in 2002 Mark Henry made three, in 2003 Savickas made four, in 2004 Savickas made five, and in 2005 Savickas made six. What's more, the man who won the Wheels event each year also won the overall title, which demonstrates what a revealing challenge it is to shoulder them and put them overhead.

The Hummer Deadlift

As we did last year, we tested the men with a variation of the standard deadlift, but instead of a normal "Olympic" bar we used a bar almost 14 feet long with a handle 1 3/8" in diameter—loaded with a combination of huge Hummer tires and barbell plates. Also, we place the bar about 1 1/2" higher off the ground than it would be with a standard bar and 45 pound plates—and in order not to over-tax the grip, we permit the men to use lifting straps, as the poundage possibilities are somewhat greater than they would be in an official IPF deadlift.

We used the "rounds" system, in which—as the deadlift bar increases in weight—each man takes his first attempt with his chosen weight (with the lightest attempts going first in each round), followed in the same way by each man's second and third attempt. Vasyi Virastyuk has improved greatly in the deadlift since last year, but in this elite field his 856 was only good for seventh place. Karl Gillingham made a terrific 900 to finish sixth, and looked good for more—as did Svend Karlsen, whose final attempt with 917 was so easy that he bounced the tires and tried for a second rep just for the crowd. Karlsen's 917 was matched by an effortless attempt with the same weight by Savickas, who was taking it easy in anticipation of the events to follow. Karlsen and Savickas shared fourth place.

God only knows what Brian Siders could have lifted on his last attempt, but the 933 that he made was far, far below his capacity. Second place went to UNLV's rugged strength coach, Mark Philippi, with a clutch lift on a well-chosen 950. The last man out was the crowd-pleasing Glenn Ross, who stomped up the platform stairs wearing his Irish-green socks and no shoes. Glenn had wanted to take at least 1000 pounds because his second attempt, with 933, was a laugh, but commonsense prevailed and he took just enough to create a new record (977 pounds) and increase the likelihood that he'd make the lift and get extra points for winning the event. And make it he did—with power to

spare. Following this massive pull he pointed to the crowd of many thousands, yelled "Who's your Daddy?", walked around the front of the stage, acknowledged the screaming fans, ambled back to the waiting television interviewer, and announced, "Breaking world records is what The Daddy's all about. And when it comes to the deadlift, I am The Daddy!" The smart money says that in 2006 at least one man will raise a thousand pounds in the Hummer Deadlift.

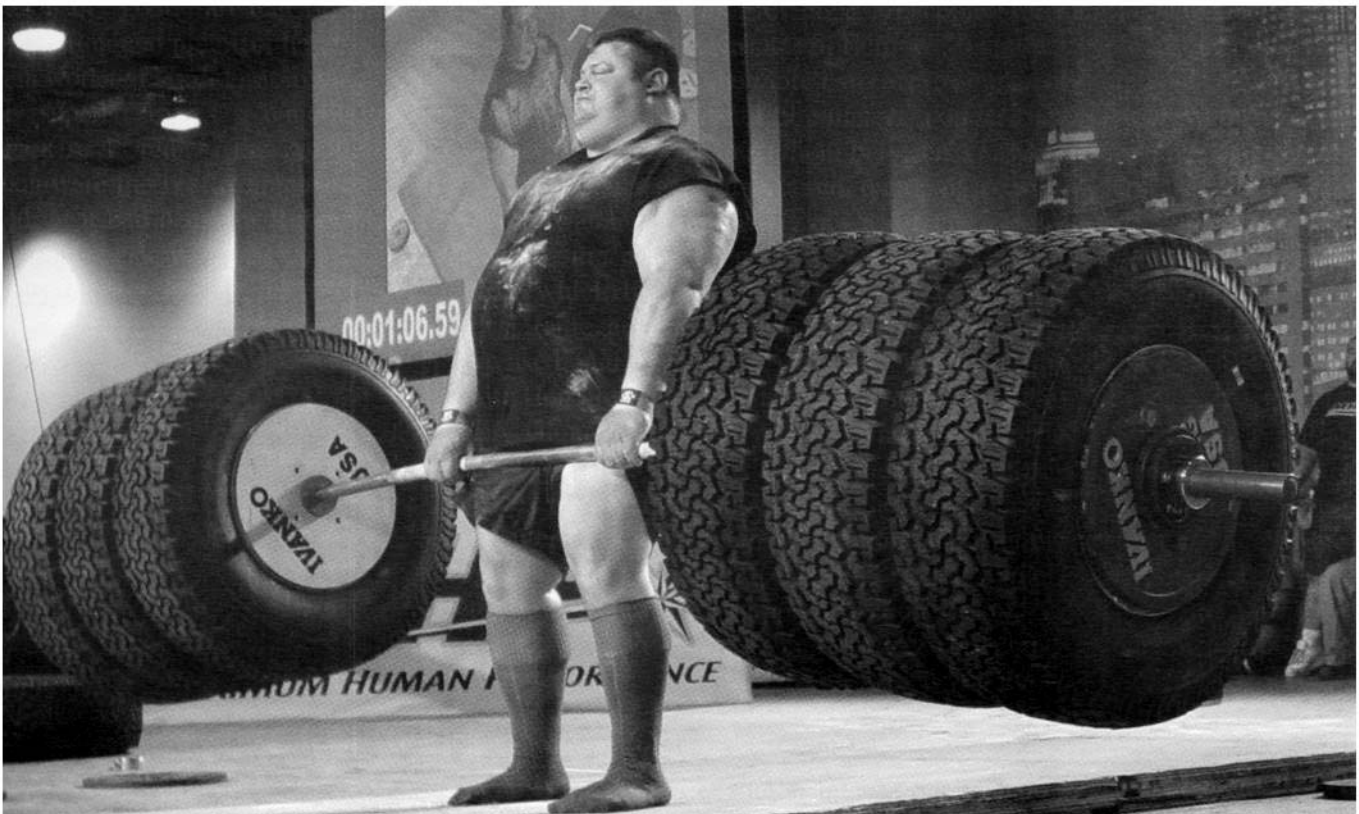
The Medicine Ball Toss

This event—as in the case of the first two—was a holdover from 2004. Although we use a medicine ball that weighs "only" fifty pounds, we believe that the event is an accurate test of the explosive power of an athlete's entire body. This contention is supported by the fact that in 2003 the winner of the Toss was Karlsen, who finished second overall, and by the further fact that in 2004 the winner of the Toss was the overall victor, Savickas. (Read on to learn if this tradition holds.) We also thought it would be wise to keep the Toss, even though it's a bit less exciting to watch than our other events, because we were adding an extra event for the

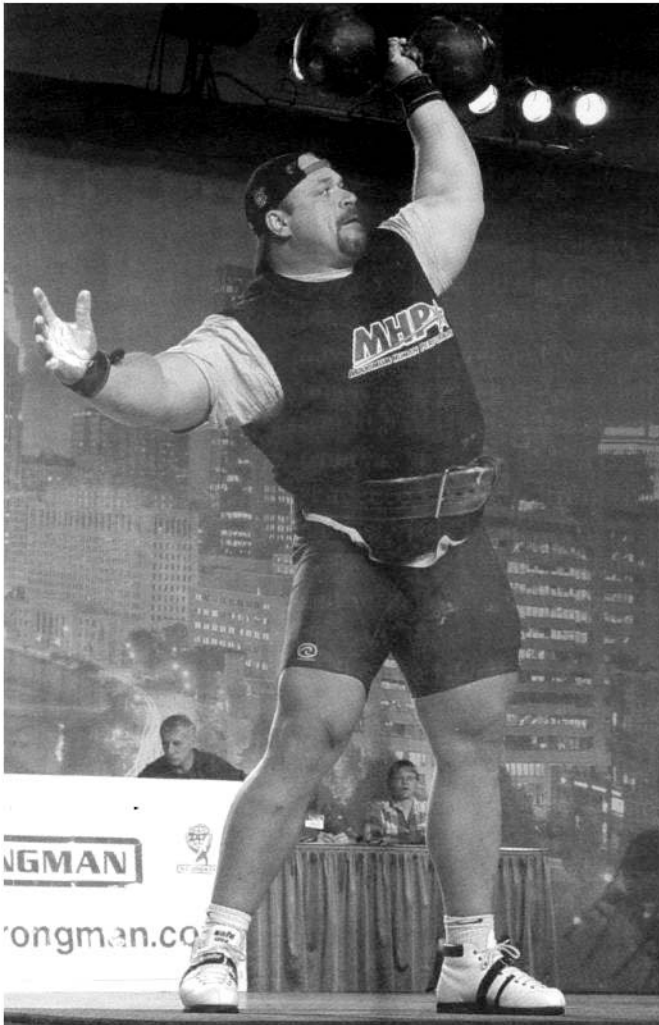
2005 contest. It seemed to us that keeping an event that takes a bit less from the athletes' strength and energy reserves was a good idea.

In the Toss, each man could choose three heights, and the aim was to hit a 4'x6' piece of plywood supported by cables and dangling directly over the athlete's head. We believe that throwing an implement over a bar requires more timing and skill, and that the results of such contests don't always reflect who has the most power. (It's hard to miss a piece of 4'x6' plywood.) Surprisingly, four of the six men failed to reach the plywood at 15', but five men made at least 15'6". Two of these—Svend Karlsen and Karl Gillingham—bowed out at this height and tied for fourth. Third went to Vasyly Virastyuk, an internationally ranked shot putter who was one of the favorites to win the event until it was learned that he had injured his left biceps several weeks before the contest. Vasyly made 16', and after each valiant effort at 17' he clutched his left elbow and screamed in pain—having apparently aggravated his injury.

Last year's winner was Zydrunas Savickas, but this year he had to share his first place with 6'6" Magnus Samuelsson as both men reached 17' easily.



"Big Daddy" Glenn Ross of Ireland was a solid winner in the Hummer Deadlift, managing to pull 977 pounds to edge out World Powerlifting Champion Brian Siders and UNLV strength Coach Mark Philippi.



The big Canadian Hugo Girard tied for first with the Inch Dumbbell. He made four lifts with his right hand and six with his left.

Samuelsson, in fact, came within a red hair's breadth from hitting the board at 17'6", and it was a fine thing to see the Swedish colossus have a good event as he was a bit off earlier in the day in the first two events.

The Inch Dumbbell

The first event on Saturday's schedule was new—and everyone associated with the competition was anxious to see how things would turn out. Many hours of discussion went into the final rules that governed the event. These discussions involved our executive committee as well as other people with experience in strength competitions. The implement we decided to use closely resembles the heaviest of the several dumbbells owned and used by England's Thomas Inch—a professional strongman and lifter in the early part of the Twen-

tieth Century. The replica we used weighed 172 pounds, and the thick handle is said to measure 2.47" in diameter, which, according to the current owner of the Inch Dumbbell, Kim Wood, is approximately 4/100 of an inch larger than that of the original. In any case, it is a thick, thick handle, and for years Inch offered a substantial amount of money to anyone who could budge the 172 pound bell off the floor—and it is said that he never had to pay. Even today, only a truly strong man can clear the ground with one of the "replicas," and far fewer men are able to stand up straight with an Inch Bell, as in a finished deadlift. (In 2003, Mark Henry became the first man to clean an Inch Bell with one hand and then lift it overhead.)

Obviously, it is much less of a challenge to lift an Inch Dumbbell overhead with one hand than it is to clean it with one hand, but even an overhead lift is anything but easy. The reason for this is the same as the reason that the bell is so hard to lift off the ground with one hand—the *thickness of the handle*. During a press or push-press, the width of the handle forces the hand open, and it places the center of gravity of the bell much farther from the wrist than would be the case with a dumbbell handle of normal thickness—making it almost seem as if you're having to balance the bell in your open palm as you press it.

During the many discussions about which rules we should use, there were suggestions that we should give higher points for a press than for a push-press, and more for a push-press than for a jerk, but we decided such a rule would simply make a hard-to-judge event even harder to judge. We also rejected the suggestion that we give more points to anyone who cleaned the bell to the shoulder with one hand rather than with two. We rejected this suggestion, primarily, because we wanted to spare the men's grip, as we knew they'd need it later in the day when they would have to carry 865 pounds of wood and iron up a 40' ramp using just their bare hands. At that point in the contest, little did we know that the lifting of the Inch Bell would, indeed, cause problems in the Timber Carry (Farmer's Walk) for reasons that were unrelated to the stress of trying to *clean* the implement. More on this later.

As for how the reps should be done, we briefly discussed requiring the men to move from one hand to the other, with the bell being replaced on the platform after each rep, or requiring that the men make two or three reps (or try to make two or three) with their "begin-

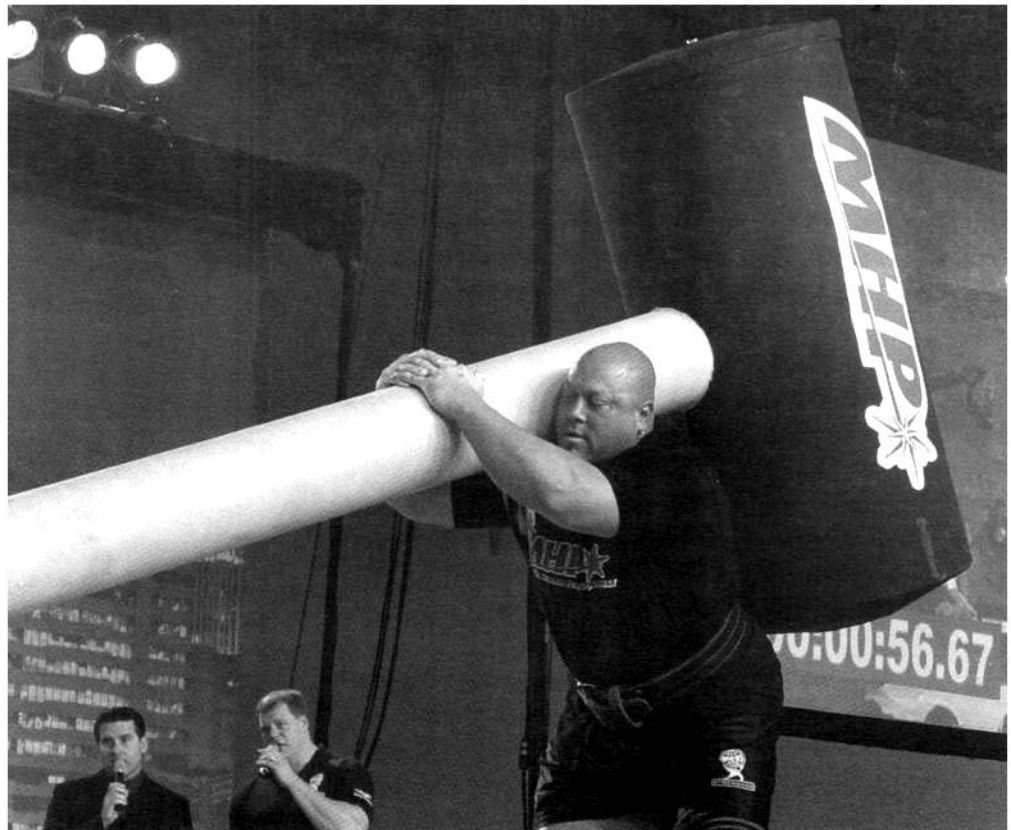
ning" hand before going on the other hand, and so on. In the end, we chose a simpler path; we told the men that they could use two hands to bring the bell to their shoulder and to lower it to their shoulder after each rep, but that they could go from hand to hand in whatever way they wished and that they could even do all of their reps with only one hand if they preferred. We gave them ninety seconds, as we wanted to provide a little time for a puff if they needed a breather between efforts.

Hugo Girard was the first man out as he was in last place after the first day's events, but he gave a stellar performance, registering ten total reps—four with the right and six with the left. Hugo told me that he trains often with an Inch replica, and that he had hoped for a few more than ten. Van Hatfield, the current U.S. strongman champion, managed five reps, as did his countryman Karl Gillingham. Magnus Samuelsson only got two, which was surprising. Mark Philippi's performance was also a bit less than we expected, and he got credit for three.

Among the leaders at that point in the overall contest, Karlsen fell back a bit when he was only able to elevate the bell four times. Zydrunas Savickas' seven reps, while outstanding, somehow seemed mediocre as everyone expects him to either win or finish second in every event. As it was, Vasyl Virastyuk was currently in second place, and he picked up some ground over Savickas by making four reps with his right arm and five with his left—now heavily wrapped because of his biceps injury. The two most awe-inspiring performances of the day were turned in by Brian Siders and Glenn Ross. Ross went just before Siders and knocked out seven quick and easy reps with his right hand. He then returned the bell to the platform and brought it to his shoulder for an attempt with his left hand. To every-

one's surprise, the bell hesitated on the way up, drifted back, and was then dropped—no lift. After a short rest, Glenn brought the bell again to his right shoulder, began to press it only to have it also drift back over his shoulder and several inches downward. However, in a mind-boggling display of shoulder strength he somehow brought it slowly back into the groove and pressed it gradually to full arm's length. His ninth rep was, amazingly, an exact replica of his eighth—and those two reps were widely discussed after the event by old hands in the strength game, all of whom said those reps were among the most impressive feats of pressing they had ever seen. To top it off, Ross then put the bell down, brought it up to his left shoulder and made his tenth rep. At the conclusion of his performance, the five to six thousand people who were watching let out a thunderous roar to let The Daddy know how much they appreciated his massive strength.

Brian Siders' strength was more contained, but it was no less stark and memorable. He began with his right hand and made five apparently effortless reps



Van Hatfield, a first-time competitor in the Arnold Strongman Classic, was a surprise winner in the Hammer. Hatfield, the current U.S. champion, raised the huge hammer to the upright position in only 16.5 seconds.



UNLV strength coach Mark Philippi proved he had some of the mightiest mitts in the world by winning the Timber Carry. Note the kilt-clad chief referee, David Webster, on the right.

before replacing the bell on the platform. He then went to his left hand and made two more before stopping to catch his breath for perhaps thirty seconds. Next, he did three more solid, pure presses with his right before dropping the bell onto the stage at the edge of the platform. Not yet satisfied, he stepped off the platform, pulled the bell to his right shoulder and once again pressed it to arm's length only to lose his balance because of the somewhat springy platform before he could get the down signal from Odd Haugen, the referee for the event.

The Hammer of Strength

This event was introduced last year, but because of a mistake by the organizers who scheduled the events that day in the huge Expo Center our men didn't have the proper amount of time to truly test their strength. Accordingly, we were all flying somewhat blind as to just how much weight we needed to add to the already weighty, 18' implement—which looks like a gigantic sledge hammer. The Hammer is constructed so that it can be moved up little by little as a series of "catches" keep it from falling downward while the athlete moves forward and resets himself for the next upward push. The "shaft" of the Hammer is approximately the thickness of a large telephone pole, and at the start the men have to squat down, take the shaft on either their right or their left shoulder, and push upward until they hear a "click" indicating that they can ease off and move down

the shaft for their next push.

Unfortunately, both Svend Karlsen and Hugo Girard were injured on this event. Svend sustained a slight, and not serious, tear in the fascia of his hip and decided not to push it, but Hugo suffered a torn Achilles tendon which required surgery when he returned to Quebec. Magnus Samuelsson also dropped out early as he was unable to get the Hammer moving on his first attempt, in part because his great height forced him into a fairly deep squat relative to the beginning positions used by the other men.

Placings were determined either by the height to which the Hammer was lifted—in case the Hammer was not lifted until it was standing straight up—or by the time it took to take it all the way up. After

a "qualifying round," which eliminated five men from going to the heavier weight, sixty-six pounds were added, and the men were told that they would be given thirty seconds to lift it as far up as possible. In an amazing display of power, all five remaining men moved through all six "clicks," or levels, and stood this Brobdingagian Hammer straight up in the air—to the delight of the screaming throng encircling the 50'x50' stage.

Of the five top men, Mark Philippi took it to the top in 22.13 seconds, and he lost valuable time by trying to move up two "clicks" on one push—a risky strategy. He finished fifth, less than two seconds slower than Glenn Ross, who moved the monstrous Hammer and his own monstrous self to a vertical position in 20.83 seconds. Savickas also cost himself a few seconds by trying to take two levels with one push, but still managed to finish in only 20.45 seconds. The winner was decided by less than a tenth of a second, as Vasyl Virastyuk needed 16.84 seconds to hit the top position whereas Van Hatfield put on a great show with a piston-like series of pushes that took only 16.75 seconds to complete.

The Timber Carry

The Timber Carry is the Arnold Strongman Classic's version of the Farmer's Walk, and the event has been essentially unchanged over the four years of the contest. To lift the 865 pound load of timbers and iron and to carry it up a forty-foot ramp is a daunting task for

2005 Arnold Strongman Classic

Final Results

Competitors in Order of Finish	Apollon's Wheels (Cleans-Continental-Jerks)	PI	Pts	Hummer Dead-lift (Lbs)	PI	Pts	Medicine Ball Toss	PI	Pts	Inch DB Reps	PI	Pts	Hammer Lift	PI	Pts	Timber Carry	PI	Pts	Final Pts	Prize Money
1. Zydrunas Savickas	0-6-6	1	10	917	4	6.5	17ft	1	9.5	7 (7-Rt 0-Left)	5	6	Rd. 2-All in 20.45	3	8	6 ft 5 in	5	6	46	Hummer, Watch & \$16,000
2. Vasyil Virastyuk	2-3-5	2	9	856	7	4	16ft	3	8	9 (4-Rt 5-Left)	4	7	Rd. 2-All in 16:84	2	9	4 ft 10½ in	7	4	41	\$15,000
3. Glenn Ross	0-4-3	5	6	977	1	10	0	7	2.5	10 (9-Rt 1-Left)	1	9	Rd. 2-All in 20.83	4	7	6 ft 2 in	6	5	39.5	\$11,000
4. Mark Philippi	2-0-1	8	3	950	2	9	15ft	6	5	3 (1-Rt 2-Left)	9	2	Rd. 2-All in 22.13	5	6	23 ft 6 in	1	10	35	\$9,000
5. Brian Siders	0-5-5	3	8	933	3	8	0	7	2.5	10 (8-Rt 2-Left)	1	9	Rd. 1, Hole 5 in 50:78.	7	4	3 in	8	3	34.5	\$8,000
6. Svend Karlsen	2-2-3	4	7	917	4	6.5	15.5ft	4	6.5	4 (4-Rt 0-Left)	8	3	Rd. 1 Hole 0	9	1.5	14 ft 8½ in	2	9	33.5	\$6,000
7. Van Hatfield	0-3-3	6	5	799	8	2.5	0	7	2.5	5 (4-Rt 1-Left)	6	4.5	Rd. 2-All in 16:75	1	10	8 ft 9 in	3	7.5	32	\$4,000
8. Karl Gillingham	0-3-0	9	1.5	900	6	5	15.5ft	4	6.5	5 (4-Rt 1-Left)	6	4.5	Rd. 1, Hole 4	8	3	8 ft 9 in	3	7.5	28	\$3000
9. Hugo Girard	0-4-2	7	4	799	8	2.5	0	7	2.5	10 (4-Rt 6-Left)	1	9	Rd. 1, Hole 5 in 27.15	6	5	0	10	0	23	\$2000
10. Magnus Samuelsson	0-3-0	9	1.5	700.5	10	1	17ft	1	9.5	2 (2-Rt 0-Left)	10	1	Rd. 1 Hole 0	9	1.5	0	10	0	14.5	\$1000

a completely fresh athlete to face, but to have to face it after two exhausting days and five bone-bending events is asking a great, great deal. And this year it was asking a bit too much, as the task was, indeed, "a bridge too far."

The first year, we used "only" 815 pounds, and four of the eight athletes carried the load to the top, but that year they only had to do three earlier events instead of the five we required this year. In 2003, based partly on the athletes' recommendations, we added fifty pounds to the load, but only two men—Svend Karlsen and Zydrunas Savickas—managed to make it all the way up. In 2004, the weight remained unchanged, but we added an event—so the men were that much less fresh by the time of the final event. That year, even though most of the men took it a long way up the ramp, only the seemingly unbeatable Savickas was able to take it to the top. Not only that, he almost ran up the ramp, finishing in record time to the delight of the crowd.

This year, alas, the capacity crowd at the downtown auditorium wasn't treated to the Hollywood finish of the last two years, as not a single one of our leviathans could lift and carry the load all the way up the ramp. Of the eight men who tried, only two were able to take it more than ten feet—Svend Karlsen at 14'8.5", and veteran Mark Philippi, who by managing 23.6" leapfrogged Brian Siders in the final points, making substantially

more money in the process. Prior to Savickas' attempt, the other top men averaged about four feet. When Savickas began to chalk up, however, most of the athletes and officials—and anyone else who had seen his Herculean efforts in either of the two previous years—were expecting another majestic march to the top. But a little more than six feet later the giant had dropped the Timbers four times and was done. Obviously, these huge young bulls could all carry the 865 pounds to the top of the ramp if they were using lifting straps—so the problem was clearly their grip. Somehow, something had happened this year that eroded their grips to such an extent that their performance, collectively, was less than half of what it had been the year before.

Later that evening, as the officials, coaches, and athletes sat around rehashing the events of the past two days, it was finally agreed that the culprit behind the poor performance in the Timber Carry was the Inch Dumbbell. Apparently, the effect earlier in the day of having to control the Coke-can-thick bar of the Inch Dumbbell as it was being elevated overhead again and again was a weakened grip. The men seemed to feel that it was necessary to squeeze the Inch Bell bar just to hold it still as it was going to arm's length, and if it got out of the groove and threatened to drift back over the shoulder it had to be fought back into place with the muscles on the thumb side of the hand. No other explanation seems



Contest organizer and IGH editor Terry Todd congratulates three-time three time winner Zydrunas Savickas--to whom he's just presented the bronze, fifty-pound Louis Cyr trophy.

possible, as we didn't change the handles or add weight, and as the men, overall, exceeded the performances made in the same events last year. At the end of the evening we concluded that by being so concerned about having the mens' grips over-stressed during attempts to add points by cleaning the Inch Bell, we failed to realize just how much grip-work would be involved in simply controlling the bell as it was being raised to full arm's length overhead. Next year, we plan to find a way to minimize the chances of this happening again. One thing we don't plan to do is to drop the lifting of the Inch Dumbbell, as the event riveted the audience, many of whom yelled out the rep count as the bell went up again and again.

Overall, we were pleased with the 2005 Arnold Strongman Classic as we had better performances across the board than we have ever had—with the exception of the Timber Carry. Also, although it seemed impossible, the prevailing view is that we had even larger crowds this year than ever before. When our ten behemoths—

averaging approximately 6'3" and 340 pounds—strode onto the stage to be introduced, bearing the flags of the seven countries they represented, the tens of thousands of people flooding the trade-show in the Expo Center began to gravitate toward the stage in anticipation of seeing heavyweights move heavy weights. They were not disappointed.

We're proud that the contest we began over four years ago has become an important part of the Iron Game calendar, and proud that we're able to offer the largest prize package in the sport. It's a fine thing to see these hard-working athletes have a few good paydays for a change. This year's

repeat winner, Zydrunas Savickas, for example, went back to Lithuania with cash, the keys to his third new Hummer, and an Audemars-Piguet watch—for a total purse of almost \$100,000. John Davis, Norbert Schemansky, Doug Hepburn, and a lot of other great champions from the past never saw any real money from their lifting—and that was wrong.

Strongman competitions have come a long way in the thirty years since Trans-World International created the "World's Strongest Man" show for television, and we are told by Jim Lorimer and others that our contest has been the most popular part of "The Arnold" for the last several years. Even so, we hope to make the show even better next year—so that it can continue to hold pride of place among the thirty sports that will be represented in Columbus in 2006 at the ABSOLUTELY ENORMOUS SPORTS FESTIVAL known around the world as the Arnold Fitness Weekend.

—Terry Todd

Photography by Angela Brown and Jan Todd