

Profile

Matt Saunders

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I am 37 years old, married to Claire and have two children, Oliver 6 & Joshua 3. I am currently serving in the RAF at Wyton, in Cambridgeshire and have been in the RAF for 20 years.

Explain a little about drug-free powerlifting.

Drug-free Powerlifting offers its members an alternative to “drug-enhanced” competition. It is rapidly rising in both numbers and standards, making it a very creditable sport to be associated with.

What are your best lifts?

My best competition lifts are: 315.5 kg Squat, 222.5kg Bench Press, and 335kg Deadlift.

What titles do you hold or have held?

I have been World Champion in the 100kg class for the last 10 years running. I have been “overall” World Champion 4 times. I have also been British Champion 8 times and European Champion 5 times. I have won numerous World, European & British Single lift titles.

What records do you hold or have held?

I hold British records in all 3 disciplines as well as “total.” I hold the World record in the Bench Press, World record in the Deadlift, and European records in Bench Press, Deadlift and “total.” There may be a few more in there somewhere but I can’t remember!

What is your training regime?

I train 4 days a week. Legs on day 1, Chest & Biceps on day 2, Day 3 off, Back on day 4, Shoulders & Triceps on day 5. Days 6 & 7 off. I also mix up the body parts occasionally to keep things interesting.

How long have you been powerlifting?

I have been training for 19 years and competing at a National level and above for 10 years.

How important are training partners to you?

Training partners are IMMENSELY important to me. Not only do they encourage and ensure you hit your targets, they also make sure that you are safe in the gym. Finding a good training partner, however, is very difficult. They have to be as dedicated and motivated as you, but without the glory at the end! I am very lucky that my training partner, Scott Graysmark, fills all of the above criteria!

What made you become a powerlifter?

I was a competitive bodybuilder, competing in the ANB (Association of Natural Bodybuilders). My training partner at the time was entering the RAF Powerlifting Champs and suggested I entered. I did, and I won. From that point on bodybuilding took a back seat to Powerlifting.

What is your favourite assistance exercise?

Front shoulder press. An essential exercise to Powerlifters. Helps with your Bench Press and acts as a stabilizer for the bar when squatting.

What is the biggest mistake that beginners make?

Going too heavy too early! Bad form is always the result, leading to injury. I see it all the time in the gym.

What is your advice for beginners?

Don't try to run before you can walk. Established lifters like myself, Dean Mikosz, Rick Meldon, Mark Norton etc. have all paid their dues. Be patient and the results will invariably come. Also, don't miss training sessions. Rest assured your competitors won't!

What are some of your most memorable powerlifting experiences?

Naturally winning my first World title back in 1997 at the first attempt is extremely memorable to me. Witnessing Audley Baker doing his 970kg "total" back in 2000 is also a highlight. Winning my 10th consecutive World title last year must also rank up there as well!

What is the craziest thing you ever seen in powerlifting?

Watching Dean Mikosz complete a 260kg squat midst throwing up on the platform! The center ref had a shock, that's for sure. Unfortunately he failed the lift 2 to 1. Travesty!

What are your future goals?

Hitting an 880Kg total for the World Record "total." Individually I have done more than this on separate lifts, but hitting all 3 lifts together on the same day is the key, as many of you will know.

What do you think is the most important factor when it comes to upping your lifts?

Consistency and damned hard work! Never miss a training session, log all your lifts and plan a realistic program to achieving those lifts. Goals are very important in this sport. If you don't set realistic goals you will just drift through training sessions, staying in the "comfort zone." Champions always go that one step further.

Do you think powerlifting should become an Olympic sport?

I think it should, however I don't believe it ever will. If it did we would probably lose out to BAWLA as the representative body.

How do you see the future of powerlifting?

We are definitely moving forward. Our federation is slowly growing in both numbers and credibility. The standard of our lifters and the "totals" they are achieving has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. That can only be good for our sport. No longer are we seen as an alternative to BAWLA for picking up "cheap" titles.

What does your diet consist of?

Pasta, Potatoes, tuna, fish, chicken, rice, supplements. All the usual bodybuilding type foods. Your diet is very important to your training. It makes a massive difference to your mood and energy levels, as well as your ability to recover from the monster training sessions. This is more important than ever to us as "natural" athletes. However, I do cheat occasionally with Indian or Chinese food!

What makes the difference between an average lifter and a champion?

Dedication. Genetics. Hard work. Ambition.

What training style do you think works best?

I don't know the answer to that. This is the search for the "Holy Grail." I can say what works for me though. I train as a body builder in the off-season whilst keeping all three Powerlifting disciplines in my routine. 8 weeks out I start a Power phase, upping my poundages and decreasing my reps to 4-6. 4 weeks out I start my doubles and singles work and then hope I have got it right on the day! I always have a week off before the comp to make sure I am fresh on the day.

Do you think bodybuilding exercises should be in a powerlifters' routine?

Definitely! I know it is a cliché but you really are only as strong as your weakest bodypart.

What are your favourite supplements?

Promax extreme, creatine and HMB. (All Maximuscle products).

What has powerlifting taught you?

Powerlifting has taught me that with hard work and dedication you can achieve your goals. These are traits that I try to instill in my children. If you take short cuts you will always get found out, usually on the platform!

What does powerlifting mean to you?

Powerlifting has been a massive part of my life for over 10 years. I have met some of the nicest people and formed some of the best friendships in that time. It has taken me all over the world, given me an elite status as a sportsman in the RAF, and has given me values that I can pass on to others. Need I go on!