

Mike Shaw My Story – The Origins and Rise of the Drugs Phenomenon  
World & British Champion (BAWLA, IPF, BDFPA & WDFPF)

**Introduction**

I am now 75 years old and I recently discovered a totally unfounded comment on the Internet reference to me at the World Powerlifting Championships in 1971. This has committed me into writing my profile and my story of spending a total of 31 unbroken and consecutive years competing in powerlifting between 1967 and 1997.

I spent 20 years since the second year of the inauguration of the Powerlifting Division within the British Amateur Weightlifting Association (BAWLA) and affiliated to the International Powerlifting Federation (IPF). I then spent 12 years since the inauguration of the powerlifting division of the drug free British Amateur Weightlifting Guild (BAWG), which then became British Powerlifting Association (BPA) and subsequently British Drug Free Powerlifting Association (BDFPA). These were affiliated to the World Drug Free Powerlifting Federation (WDFPF).

This sport has played a significant role in my life and all of my closest friends have been weightlifters both in the gyms and socialising in pubs and clubs. I have enjoyed hundreds of rewarding experiences, even though some have been quite traumatic. However I have also had some very nasty experiences especially concerning my opposition to the use of drugs in powerlifting.

In March 1984 I wrote a letter stating my opposition and the negative approach to drug abuse in response to an article in the official Strength Athlete magazine written by a doctor who was the medical advisor to BAWLA. The article was advocating that the use of drugs was nothing more than a personal choice and drug tests were unreliable. The magazine published my letter, which I have retained in my scrapbooks.

In February 1986 I wrote a further letter that was also published stating my opposition to an article in the official International Powerlifter magazine written by the secretary of the BAWLA drug abuse committee. The article was advocating that his committee was implementing resourceful drug control which I found unacceptable and contrary to the truth and reality of what we all knew was actually going on.

So what I now hope to do is to encapsulate here what happened to me over those 31 years in the sport of Powerlifting.

**Early Life**

I was born in East London in 1940 during the war and the London bombing blitz. A bomb landed in the grounds of Forest Gate hospital where I was born, which caused the window structure to come crashing down on my mother with me alongside her. We narrowly escaped death and my mother went on to live until 1 week before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

My wife, who I have two sons with, also narrowly escaped death when a V1 rocket landed on a pub just over the road to the house where she was sleeping, along with her

brother and sister. Half of the house collapsed and the roof came down upon them. Her grandmother was in that pub and was sadly killed with everybody else inside.

We lived through a period when our country was at war and London was just one of many cities that ended up in piles of rubble. It was random luck that both my wife and myself, along with countless others escaped the aerial bombardment both sides conflicted on each other. What a way to start your life!

As a teenager I spent several years as a Royal Navy sea cadet at West Ham London. My unit was named after HMS Warrior the first ironclad battleship built in West Ham, which is where my powerlifting was about to begin. I qualified as a professional Mechanical Design Engineer and later worked for numerous Consulting Engineering companies based mainly in London.

### **Powerlifting – Early Years**

I started weight training at the age of nineteen in a local youth club and the gym was a war time Nissan wooden hut. During the 7 years that I trained there I made many close friends from all walks of life. We not only all trained together but went around the pubs, clubs and dance halls together all of which I have very fond memories of. Our instructor there loved to wind us up by saying- all you boys are as strong as lions.

During the early part of 1967, I was introduced through a friend to Dave Jones who was running and founder of The West Ham Weightlifting Club based in a building in the playground of a council school. I spent 18 years there up until the school got demolished and Dave became my very close friend and coach. I initially trained for what was then known as Olympic lifting, but I was stronger at the Powerlifting lifts, namely bench press, deadlift and squats. Our club had 3 Powerlifting teams and 2 Olympic teams competing in the London Home Counties divisional contests. Referring to the ranking lists as printed in the official Strength Athlete magazine at that time we probably had one of the strongest contingents of weightlifters in the UK.

During the summer of 1967 I entered and won The London Home Counties Powerlifting Championships at middleweight and this then automatically qualified me to compete in The British Powerlifting Championships in October 1967 held in Bristol. My coach advised me to trim down to compete at lightweight and I took the British Championship title breaking 3 British records first time out. I then went forward becoming a senior British Champion for another 8 times within the BAWLA organisation.

I was selected for the British team in an international Powerlifting tournament Great Britain (GB) vs France in 1968. Our team was successful and I defeated my French opponent M. Fernandes. In the following year of 1969 we had a return international tournament held in Paris where we were again successful as a team and I defeated my opponent Michel Ledroit. The French team and their supporters were very sporting and hospitable and cheering us on in the same spirit as their own team. On both occasions we all celebrated in the evening with music food and drinking.

In the following year 1970 I was again selected for the team for an international tournament USA vs. GB held in Los Angeles. This was my first time in the USA and

was a very special experience for me, we even got some live TV coverage on a local station. We were again successful as a team and I defeated my American opponent Bill Thurber at lightweight.

In the following year of 1971 I returned to America to compete in the first World Powerlifting Championships in Philadelphia. After my first squat lift I was in front of all of my other contestants by 10lbs. On my second squat I took the loaded bar out of the racks and was waiting for the referees signal to commence the lift. The centre referee then gave an order to me to replace the bar back into the racks.

He then spoke to the other two referees whilst I stood there dumbfounded and he then stated that my right knee wrap was too long without even inspecting it. A man appeared armed with a pair of scissors on the platform and with no word to me undid my right knee wrap and cut off a large piece then pinned the wrap back, whilst I just stood there confused and humiliated.

I had been using these standard length crepe wraps from the time that I first started powerlifting and they had been officially inspected time and time again. My anger was now sky high when approaching the bar again and I took it out of the racks, whilst shouting out a tirade of non-stop foul and abusive swear words, I was immediately given the signal to lift. The Great Britain team coach Tony Fitton was kneeling on the floor in front of me and shouting out his orders to “show these \*\*\*\*\* what it’s all about” and I completed the lift successfully and in a fit of rage. I went through the bench press and deadlift on a high and came through successfully to become the first World Lightweight Powerlifting Champion.

In the following year of 1972 I was selected to return to The USA and to defend my title but I was narrowly beaten there into second place by 10 pounds to Jack Keammerer on my total and on the final deadlift.

In the next year 1973 I arrived at the venue to defend my British Champion title just a few minutes late for the scheduled weigh-in due to a puncture in the minibus, which Dave Jones and my gym mates arrived in. My main opposition competitor on that day Mike McHugh and his coach Tony Fitton who as previously mentioned was the Great Britian coach and subsequently mine in 1971. They seized upon this opportunity by making demands upon the weighing-in officials who then refused to weigh me in despite the pleas from my coach Dave Jones and my gym club mates, who had all travelled from London to Coventry to support me.

During this debacle we sought assistance from the organising officials in another area of the building. Upon returning back to the weigh-in room we discovered that the weighing scales had been removed and hidden without a decision from the officials. We weren’t told where there were and therefore it was no longer possible for me to be weighed in. I can only use 4 letter swear and foul words to describe the backstabbing people who were responsible for this. I made my declaration there and then that I was finished with this sport once and for all. Later that year I was again selected for the forthcoming World Powerlifting Championships in America, but I had already made my mind up and I turned it down.

With the encouragement of Dave Jones and all of my mates at the West Ham weightlifting club I started shifting the weights and decided to compete again in the London Home Counties Championships where I qualified for the 1974 British Championships, which was quite ironically held in Coventry again. My main opposing powerlifter and reigning lightweight champion Mike McHugh, the man I had to stand and watch take my British Championship Lightweight Title the previous year. So here I was back in Coventry on the very same platform I wasn't allowed to step onto, facing that very same man. I regained my British champion lightweight title and thinking back I probably got more personal satisfaction with that event than winning the World championship title.

In the following year I was selected for the 1975 World Powerlifting Championships held in Birmingham England and this time I decided to compete. For the first time ever I bombed, when I took off with too higher squat poundage and it was all over for me. This was frustrating as my personal best total lift made at the British Championships as a lightweight was 1430lbs, which was higher than both the total winning lift by Jack Welch and the classified world record at the time.

For the next 5 years I continued to compete in British, Inter - County Divisional events and London Home Counties club knockout events. Each year I qualified for the British Championships, but only gaining placed positions. In 1977 I reverted back to my original bodyweight of 75 kg when I first joined The West Ham weightlifting club.

### **The Rise of Drugs**

During those years in the late 1970s the use of drugs was steadily increasing and from my experiences and what I heard I would estimate that by 1980 the use of steroids and stimulants was rife throughout powerlifter competitors. Not by everybody of course, but without any doubt there were more competitors on drugs than 'clean' lifters.

Outside of my own gym, which was anti-drugs, I had powerlifters across the UK openly telling me of their use of drugs in detail, as if it was part of normal conversation. I had people trying to sell me drugs and other powerlifters telling me that I was a mug if I was not using drugs, because I will be left behind.

A powerlifter whom I knew fairly well went on to become a prominent drug dealer. He made numerous attempts to sell me drugs and one time showed me several pages of specifications of drugs all in alphabetical order with detailed descriptions, which was probably compiled by his supplier who he told me was an overseas chemist. I asked him for copies of these, but he refused my request point blank, which was a wise move from him, as I would have passed them straight to Chelsea College drug-testing laboratory.

In his sales pitch he also told me that he was supplying drugs to not only powerlifters but to competitors in numerous other sports. Following the death of a 21 years old sportsman due to anabolic steroids I saw his name published within an investigation report by a national newspaper that alleged he supplied him with the drugs.

Later in 1978 I bumped into him at the opening day of the Peacocks boxing gym in East London and discovered that he had now changed his name and identity, I have not seen or heard of him since. At this opening day I also met up with an old friend Wag Bennett who owned a well-known gym in Forest Gate, East London. It was Wag who trained Arnold Schwarzenegger and put him on the road to success. It is no secret and well documented that Arnie admitted to using steroids whilst competing in Weightlifting and Strongman competitions.

On one occasion at the London Home Counties powerlifting championships I was sitting next to a huge and powerful super heavyweight, who was 18 years younger than me. He told me how much it had cost him purchasing drugs for this days event and he said to me "Mike, you know one day we will all end up in wheelchairs lifting these huge weights". Sadly he did actually end up in a wheelchair and he passed away at a very young age. How could such a fit and strong young man end up like this?

The growth hormone being more natural to the human body was undetectable to the drug testing laboratories during this period of time and therefore merited some attention and valid speculation. Any sportsmen using it then were assured that they would get a negative result in a drugs test. The drug was then derived from the pituitary gland of dead animals and could only be legally administered by medical practitioners. The long-term side effects were unknown.

The Daily Telegraph reported the case of a man diagnosed with stunted growth as a boy and the doctors then put him on the growth hormone. He subsequently developed a regular physique, but he developed a brain tumour and died at the age of 32. His death and the brain tumour were recorded as the result of the growth hormone. A Powerlifter tragically passed away due to a brain tumour and round about this same time. Two Powerlifters visited him in hospital where he told them the doctors were continually asking him if he had been using drugs. Drugs were being sold within the gym in which he trained, although I have no idea if he took any. The similarities may be a coincidence and irrelevant, but there was speculation amongst lifters then that the cause of his premature death may have been drug related.

In this same period of time I was looking through a National magazine and under the heading of sports food supplements the growth hormone was being advertised for sale. I could hardly believe my eyes. I posted this on to the Chelsea College for their information and the advertisement never appeared in any further editions of this magazine.

As well as Powerlifters numerous articles had been reported of deaths of competitors in bodybuilding, wrestling and athletics being recorded due to taking excessive doses of steroids. Among them was a young man named Tom Hawke. He collapsed during a workout in training for a British Strong Man contest and the cause of his death was reported as excessive amounts of drugs in his body.

Another bodybuilder who was known to be using a cocktail of drugs died at the age of 23 years of age due to excessive amounts of drugs in his body. He was sitting next to his girlfriend when he suddenly keeled over. She tried to save him, but he died in her arms. This was all reported in a national newspaper. Bill Norris who owned a

weightlifting gym in East London and was also a judge in NABBA (bodybuilding) told me that he warned this young man that if he does not pack all this up he will not see 40 to which he replied “who wants to live to 40?”

A shocking number of wrestlers have met the same fate in similar ways, which is well known and documented. Nowadays growth hormones are derived from humans (HGH), but the long-term side effects are still relatively unknown. They are continually becoming even more popular and not just amongst athletes competing at a high level, but throughout society. One of the main reasons is due to the anti-ageing benefits it is linked with.

This issue angered me and I was fed up with what was going on in the sport. At a London Home Counties Championship one of the most influential officials in powerlifting was there. I approached him in order to speak to him about my concerns about drugs. He told me to come upstairs in the bar to see him after the events had finished.

There I was about to question him about drug abuse in our sport and as soon as he saw me he said “Oh yes Mike – drugs”, he then immediately gave me the name of a powerlifter. “Contact him and he will direct and advise you on what drugs to take, how to use them and where to buy them.” I was astounded and left speechless, I just shook my head and walked away whilst thinking to myself where do I go from here?

I had many very painful experiences standing on a podium platform and reaching up to shake the hands of winning lifters who were open and unashamed drug cheats. I often felt that I wanted to grab the microphone out of the hand of the presenter and denounce them. If I should say anything at all I know that I would be accused of sour grapes and being a bad loser. I just wanted to take the smirks off of their faces, but there was nothing you could do other than keep your mouth shut. I lost count the amount of times that I had returned home from championship contests and told myself that I have had enough of all this. However if I were to have quit, I would have had to live with the fact that drug cheats with no scruples forced me out of this amateur sport and had the last laugh.

It was not rocket science to realise all of the remarkable increases in performance with powerlifters, which I witnessed and read in The Strength Athlete magazine year by year. There were lifters who were maintaining constant levels of performance for many years that suddenly increased the amount they lifted by up to 20% and most had to move up a body weight due to noticeable extra muscle they had gained.

Strange though it may seem, I had seen so many powerlifters before and after they went on steroids, I believe I could visually recognise someone on drugs just by looking at their physiques. The description of steroids, as performance enhancing drugs in my opinion is totally inadequate, because they also change the human body metabolism with an increase in muscle mass and power and strength. What chance does a clean lifter have competing against this?

It was not just performing enhancing drugs lifters were using to gain an advantage. On one occasion at the British Championships I inadvertently opened a wrong door whilst looking for the changing rooms and saw one of my competitors lying on a bed

with a doctor standing next to him. Above him was a large glass bottle containing a clear liquid with a drip feed connected to his wrist. I was perplexed and I asked him if he was ok, "Yes Mike, I am fine".

At the time I had no idea what was going on and was shocked to eventually discover that this man was indulging in bodyweight cheating. On that day I lost to him at middleweight, but his natural weight was light heavyweight and was capable of handling poundage at this weight class. The large glass bottle contained saline solutions with essential body minerals, which were being put back into his body after he had officially been weighed in at 75kg. Previous to this he had diuretic injections to remove water from his body in order to lose the weight.

Hey Presto! An 82.5kg lifter competing in the 75kg weight class! 3 times this man beat me in the British championships and I will never know what his true bodyweight was. You cannot sink much lower than this in techniques of cheating.

This wasn't the only case I'm aware of for apparent body weight cheating. I received a telephone call one day from power lifter Bertie Ryan who trained in the Redriff gym at Surrey docks London. He told me to look at the recorded results in the Strength Athlete magazine London Home Counties championship that we had both recently competed in and another event held on the same day in the same gym for its internal yearly club championships. There it was in black and white a lifter had competed twice on the same day in different weight classes in separate events.

He weighed in at the maximum weight for that bodyweight class for the first event and in the second his weight was recorded at maximum weight for the above bodyweight class. This bodyweight transformation is virtually impossible to achieve in any normal conditions and after the first event his bodyweight should logically have reduced not increased. I can only assume he never thought he would be asked to step on the scales for a second time after he had already weighed-in for the first event, which then revealed his bodyweight transformation.

Through my own experiences and similar to other 'normal' powerlifters is that following extreme exertion your whole body is in pain for at least one week and you then need at least one further week of training to return to your original levels prior to the event. You would then have to try and plan in periods of months before any further major event. However this man not only managed to compete in two events within a few hours and gain significant weight for the latter, but also managed to win both!

Bertie also told me that the saline solution was now being administered with a hypodermic needle inserted into a squeegee bottle, instead of using a glass bottle and a drip feed. I have never witnessed this myself, but nothing could surprise or shock me. I had seen enough myself already and I just simply could not relate to the mentality of these people.

During these years there was no drug testing even though the tests existed. As far as I know there was no mandatory obligation for any sporting organisation to drug test and the decision to do so was at the discretion of the governing bodies of sporting bodies. Completely out of the blue in 1980 and just 3 weeks prior to the British

Powerlifting Championships at Birmingham, rumours started to circulate that drug testing was on the agenda.

Ken Smith who was instrumental in forming the breakaway drug free BPA and then the BDFPA told me many years later that he himself forced this drug testing behind the scenes through the Sports Council. Panic set in amongst many powerlifters due to compete, running around like headless chickens wondering whether to come off of drugs just 3 weeks prior to the event? I stayed in a hotel the night before where most of the other contestants were staying and their outspoken attitude was predominantly f\*\*k the drug tests. There was even talk of a break away from BAWLA to form an organisation where drugs would NOT be banned.

Looking at the final published results I estimated that probably up to 40 per cent of qualifying contestants failed to even show up at Birmingham. That was unprecedented and clearly provided a logical indication of the extent of drug abuse in our sport.

After 5 years of previous placed positions I became British Middleweight Powerlifting Champion and British Champion again for the ninth time. One of my competitors shook my hand and said to me that his performance had been below par, because his drug schedule was in disarray due to the drug tests! I could only laugh!

Whilst I was standing outside the venue on the pavement talking to my gym mates prior to departing something unimaginable then happened. A senior influential Official was walking towards us carrying a large cardboard box in his hands. He spotted me and asked me to come over to him. He then nodded at the box and said, "Are you ok Mike?" "Yes I am fine thank you" to which he replied "If you are not certain then your bottle will accidentally fall out of the car window on the way home". I returned to my mates and reported what had just happened. I never saw what was in that box, but it was clear the reference was to my urine sample.

The final irony came when all of the urine samples were delivered to Chelsea College to be tested and were all rendered useless! This was public knowledge to everybody associated with powerlifting and reported in the published championship results.

The bottles containing the urine samples when they arrived at Chelsea College were all sealed and could not have been tampered with. The speculation was that the bottles might have been heated in an oven and then frozen in a deep freezer, but whatever did or didn't happen, they could not be analysed for drugs and ended up being a complete waste of time. The whole thing stunk! The integrity of powerlifting, an amateur sport was damaged even further, by people who were entrusted to maintain it.

Soon after this British Championship I reached 40 years of age and could compete as a Master. In 1982 at the Senior Greater London Powerlifting Championships I broke all British Middleweight over 40's records at this one event in the squat, deadlift, bench press and total.

I continued entering national and inter-divisional contests and championships, as well inter-gym leagues in the London Home Counties. I have some good memories of

these leagues. Every year we used to have a medal presentation and party at the social club of the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club.

One contest was staged in a large borstal school and I remember the audience of schoolboys being marched military style into the hall. Another event against Acton Weightlifting Club was in fact a team from Wandsworth Prison and every member of their three-man powerlifting team was serving time for murder. The large hall in the prison was always packed and we literally had a captive audience.

I still qualified for the National Powerlifting Championships, but only taking placed positions at best. I was fully aware that I was constantly competing against drug users and it was almost impossible for me to compete. Drug testing was now in place, but I knew the testers had difficulty establishing the drugs being used, as suppliers were constantly switching to new products. Users were perfecting ways of coming off drugs prior to events and if tested the results would show up negative in a urine sample, while the metabolic effects of the steroids were still retained in their bodies.

The punishments metered out to the powerlifters who failed a drug test were often not much more than a slap on the wrist and a brief suspension. The same could be said to reports I read in all sports. Sometimes I'm left in disbelief at the views of failed and missed drug tests by sporting organisations, as well as the media. How can athletes who have been found cheating and had the physical benefits return to the sport after a relatively short ban?

Following positive results in the Olympic games I wrote two letters to UK Athletics suggesting to them that the only way forward with drug control was to instigate a zero tolerance policy similar to the policy of the BDFPA. I received one reply, which was negative and evaded the ultimate solution, life bans with zero tolerance.

## **BDFPA**

In 1985 Ken Smith and Tony Cook amongst others formed a breakaway group from BAWLA for zero tolerance drug-free powerlifting within The British Amateur Weightlifting Guild (BAWG). I did not hesitate become a member, along with some other well-known anti-drug power lifters. I had no idea if BAWG would be a success, but within a relatively short space of time other countries were forming anti-drug organisations. There was no doubt how the use of drugs in powerlifting divided the sport worldwide and The World Drug-Free Powerlifting Federation (WDFPF) was soon formed. Powerlifting within BAWG was then established as the British Powerlifting Association (BPA) and then the British Drug Free Powerlifting Association (BDFPA).

In that same year of 1985 I became a senior and master British Champion in the BAWG. I was also selected by BAWLA to compete in that year's World Masters Powerlifting championships to be held in Canada. However I had no inclination to travel all the way to Ontario to compete against drug users and take time off work, so I declined the invitation.

In 1986 I had to qualify for the British Championships (BAWLA) through the London Home Counties Championships. I sent in my official entry form with a cheque for the

fee for this event. The cheque was then returned to me and I was informed that they would not accept my entry, because I was a member of another organisation.

When I became a World Champion in 1971 under BAWLA they granted me life membership of their organisation. In 1986 I believe that I was the only powerlifter in the UK to have qualified and to make the British platform for 19 consecutive years. One year I even competed when I had not recovered from a severe muscle tear in my right thigh through a squat lift. I actually heard my thigh muscle rip. The inside of my thigh up into my groin and the lower part of my stomach turned purple. It took one year to fully recover before my squats returned to normal. This is how determined I was to compete, so I felt very passionate about qualifying and making the British platform for the twentieth consecutive time.

I wrote a letter to the secretary of BAWLA to appeal the decision and to remind him that I am a life member of BAWLA. The conclusion of his response to my letter, which came at the eleventh hour, was that he would allow me to compete, but with the caveat that I had to do the following two things:

- 1) Resign from the drug free organisation
- 2) Denounce the drug free organisation

It wasn't a tough decision, I viewed his offer as contempt and he obviously had no respect for me.

I had known a BAWLA official for over 25 years who lived quite near to me and I visited him on the day before the championships. I showed him the BAWLA rulebook and he agreed with me that I should be able to lift, plus the decision to prevent me from competing was completely wrong and out of order. I said thank you and told him I was going to turn up to compete. If they were going to tell me that I couldn't compete they could tell me to my face.

When I arrived the next day this same official and another refused to weigh me in. They were weightlifters themselves who I regarded as mates and I couldn't believe the way I was being treated. Although this didn't comply with their own rules I knew it was inevitable my time with BAWLA had come to an end, but I had to say one final goodbye.

The British masters championships was coming up at Cambridge and I decided to go there with my two young sons. My mission was to inform everybody why I was not competing, how I had been treated and banned from competing. I felt I had to do this, because otherwise none of them probably would ever have been told the truth or worse still somebody may have decided to spread false rumours. After more than 20 years I no longer had any trust or allegiance to them, so I did what I had to do.

I had known most of these powerlifters for many years and even those who I knew were taking drugs I still regarded as mates. I said my farewells and made my position quite clear that I was now a member of a drug-free organisation, a few lifters there did eventually join too. I had now finally shut the door on BAWLA for good, but I was already on another road within drug free organisations.

I now had a future with drug free organisations that had a zero tolerance policy with drug abuse. I finally waved goodbye to all the drug users, who I always affectionately called Junkies and felt like I was now competing on a level playing field, which I hadn't felt since my early years of competing.

I spent the next 12 years within the drug free organisations until I retired in 1997, exceeding my goal of 30 consecutive and unbroken years of competing in powerlifting up to the age of 57. I am very happy to say that I cannot think of one single negative experience during these years.

I became World Master Powerlifting Champion in 1992 and again in 1995. In the same year of 1995 I also became European Champion. In total I won 8 British drug free Powerlifting Championships the last of which was in 1997 at Southampton.

In summary my achievements in powerlifting are:

- 31 consecutive and unbroken years in competition (17 years as a master)
- 3 World Champion titles
- 1 European Champion title
- 17 British Champion titles

I have during this period set numerous records from World to London divisional levels, as both a lightweight and middleweight, in all 3 lifts and total lifts, as a senior and master. In total I broke 58 records in BAWLA and IPF, plus a further 28 in the drug free organisations BAWG, BPA, BDFPA and WDFPF giving me a combined total of 86 in all.

I have 2 full up trophy cabinets and scrapbooks recording all of my achievements, record breaking and championship certificates, magazine clippings and involvements in powerlifting over this period year by year. The one man that I owe everything to is my life long mate and coach Dave Jones who retired back to his native Wales many years ago, but I am still in contact with him.

If on any occasion somebody has entered my home and seen my trophy cabinets for the first time, I always say hand on heart that I owe everything in those cabinets to my gym mates. I could not have achieved what I have done without the assistance and encouragement from all of them over those years. I hope that they will also remember me for my reciprocal commitment to them.

If this might sound a little patronising it is not meant to, we worked out in the gym together and arrived at our competitions together. I always felt committed to putting everything that I possibly could do into a lift, because if I let myself down I will also be letting them down at the same time, so the commitment was always there.

18 years have now passed since I last entered a powerlifting contest or attended an event and I am obviously out of touch. However I still dead lift and work out regularly in a local gym to keep fit.

I explained at the beginning what prompted me into drawing up my profile and I hope that I have put all of this into perspective and reality. I also hope that perhaps I have

enlightened any powerlifters who may not be fully informed or just curious about what went on in powerlifting in the UK through my own personal experiences prior to joining the BDFPA.

Whilst writing this I stumbled across the story of Tony Fitton, 'the Steroid Godfather' for the first time; it is staggering and almost beyond belief! Selling drugs on an industrial scale, custodial sentences and then deported from the USA. A powerlifter from Rochdale, official GB team coach in the 1971 world powerlifting championships and the man who was instrumental in preventing me from being weighed in to defend my British Champion title in 1973.

I would also wish to make it clear that wherever I have not attached names of people to any matters relating to drug abuse or dealing it is, because I have searched on the internet and there is no known association of them being linked to drugs. Even though this all happened many years ago and the majority are now deceased, I would not wish to put anybody into areas of possible criminality.

I am extremely pleased that the BDFPA and the WDFPF are still highly functional and thriving. Zero tolerance of drugs and with life bans for offenders is the only way to eliminate drugs from sports, zero actually means zero with these bodies. Their policies on refusal or a failure to be present for a drug test when required is the equivalent of a positive result; there is no other way. Imagine if you were pulled over by the police and you refused to take a breathalyser test, would you expect the consequences to be less? Will the rest of the sporting world ever follow?

I just wish that the BDFPA and the WDFPF had been there in 1967 when I first entered powerlifting.

The following is a list of weightlifting friends I would like to thank. Powerlifting is of course an amateur and minority sport, so I have stated their occupations to demonstrate their varied and diverse backgrounds,

Dave Jones (my coach) – Carpenter

Alwyn Jones (son of Dave Jones and team mate at West Ham gym) – City office Executive

Bill Davidson (team mate at West Ham gym) – Ex-Royal Navy

Ronnie Diggins (team mate at West Ham gym) – Pipe Fitter in his own company

Ronnie Stewart (team mate at West Ham gym) – Ex-RAF and an Accountant

Bob Clark (team mate at West Ham gym) – Scottish Wrestler

Brian Mitchell (team mate at West Ham gym) – Fireman

Gary Wakeham (team mate at West Ham gym) – Builder

John Batt (team mate at West ham gym) – Docker

Peter Wiles (team mate at West Ham gym) – Car Mechanic

Bob Little (team mate at West Ham gym) – Accountant

Alan Oldershaw (team mate at West Ham gym) – Bank Personnel

Charlie Millhouse (team mate at West Ham gym) – Motorcycle Mechanic

Stefan Bud (team mate at West Ham gym) – Cab Driver

Terry Outram (team mate at West Ham gym) – Electrician

George Tyler (from my youth club gym) – RAF Fighter Pilot

Peter Lavender (from my youth club gym) – Prison Officer

Alan Murphy (powerlifter) – Mercenary Soldier who served under mad Mike Hoare  
Ian Lynch (powerlifter) – University Lecturer  
Ian Pitceathly (powerlifter) – Pianist in a Classical Orchestra

Within a period as long as 31 years I made many weightlifting mates in London gyms competing in London Home Counties. I also had mates in all parts of the UK, because I was always there for national and divisional events competing or supporting other contestants. George Kirkley who edited the original Strength Athlete magazine referred to me as ‘The Evergreen Mike Shaw’ in an article and I have a copy of this in my scrapbook.

Thanks George and Dave Jones my coach and life long mate. Thanks especially to Ken Smith co-founder of the BDFPA, along with Tony Cook and everybody in this organisation whom has kept powerlifting thriving under zero tolerance of drugs. They provided me with the opportunity to extend my powerlifting career through and into 1997, which I will always be grateful for.