

## **WDFPF World Powerlifting Championships & Congress 2003 – St Petersburg**

Report from Andrew Cominos

This had been a much anticipated competition, but in retrospect many practical difficulties that we encountered took the shine off the event for quite a few people. For starters, actually getting there was a nightmare, the main problems being in the obtaining of visas and the transfer of money to the Russians. I personally spent many hours in trying to sort out these issues on behalf of just about everyone who went to St.Petersburg. Had we known the nature of these hiccups in advance it is true to say that things would have been organized in a different way. There were also other problems, not the least of which was the inconsistent levels of accommodation at the centre. A few days after the championship I did receive an apology from the organizers for the fact that certain things were not up to an acceptable standard, although clearly many of the shortcomings at the venue were beyond their control. On the plus side, there was some outstanding lifting over the two days, with quite a few countries represented. The 'Team England' tracksuits looked very impressive, and this was the first time in the WDFPF that lifters from the BDFPA actually looked like members of a team. I was very proud of everyone.

Women Unequipped:-

Judy Gedney lifted at M5 but weighed in at just a fraction over the 47.5 limit. She was a bit down on last year but still got 8 out of 9. The high attempt success rate is a mark of her long experience and understanding of her own form. Well done Judy.

At 70 kg we had great lifting from the British girls. Rhonnie Owens (Wales) made the best dead lift of the whole womens' competition with 157.5 – to finish on 335, just 2.5 ahead of Mel Golding and more than 30 kg up on her performance at the Welsh Nationals in April. Mel also had a great day, and made 8 from 9 to total a full 10 kg more than she did at the British. She also pipped Judy Gedney at the post for the 'best lifter' award. This was the more remarkable considering she had been kept awake till 2.00 a.m. by some Russians partying in an adjacent room!

Men Equipped:-

Collela (Italy) was well down on last year's form, though he still impressed at 57 years old and a bodyweight of 65 kgs. He won the 67.5s unopposed.

With the non-appearance of Italy's Sebastiano Mangiameli it was clear that barring accidents, Dean Mikosz was going to have an easy win at 75kgs. So it proved, though Dean had one of his rare off-days, making only 4 lifts to finish about 70kg down on recent totals. M5 Lifter Dubrov (Russia) made a useful DL of 215, while fellow countryman Shakov at 66 years old got all 3 bench presses to end on 115.

Like Dean, Rick Meldon was lifting without any serious opposition, but nevertheless managed to put 665 together at 82.5. A 292.5 squat was a bit much on this occasion, but his dead lift looked to be moving strongly. Success on all attempts would have given him 710.

At 90 top honours went to rising Italian junior Baldini, who notched up 632.5 on just 5 good lifts. Alexei Kurkov trailed Giovanni Collela (Italy) after the squat and bench – but far superior dead lifting gave the Russian the runner-up spot by a comfortable margin.

As expected Matt Saunders easily overcame all opposition (and got 8 out of 9) to take the 100 kg title. Italy's Gesualdo is a strong all-rounder but was outclassed by the champion. Matt has no weaknesses, and is a "big finisher" into the bargain – which is why it is difficult to see any other drug-free 100 kg. lifter beating him in the foreseeable future. Russia's Krassikov is a huge sub-totaller, and can match Matt on the first two lifts – but on the DL is not in the same league.

Krassikov weighed just over the 100 kg limit on this occasion, but despite missing only one lift had to be content with 3rd place in the 110s. Runner-up spot in this class went to Les Pilling, who made a faultless start with 310 squat and 180 bench – and just missed the 310 DL which would have given him yet another 800 total – an amazing feat. Top honours went to Mark Norton, who began his quest with PBs on the squat (322.5) and bench press (222.5). He called for 230.5 on this lift to take John Feehan's world record, and actually came quite close. Despite getting only his opening DL he ended up with 815 – a lifetime best by 27.5 kgs. Michael Leliaert (USA) made his international debut in this class and gained some useful experience of competition. His dead lift is especially promising and he could well top the 300 mark before too long.

At 125 John Dietle (USA) began solidly with a world record (F/P/M) squat on 330.5. His 782.5 total was on a par with last year, and he will no doubt be joining the elite 800 kg "club" in the near future.

#### Women Equipped:-

Judy Gedney back on day 2, and once again made 8 from 9. Where does she get the energy? Probably from the same place as fellow Americans John Dietle, Michael Leliaert and Cathy Martin, though some Brits – notably Les Pilling – are also prone to getting their moneys' worth at these major meets.

At only 16 years of age Jena Poznyak has a great future. The young Russian missed only her 3rd bench – to total 320. Before long she will be a real threat to France's Maryse Peluhet, who was unable to attend this time.

At just over the 63 kg limit, Concetta Esposito (Italy) impressed on the DL with 140 – while Cathy Martin once again looked to be lifting below par – at about 6kgs lighter than in Italy last year.

#### Men Unequipped:-

This was a really interesting day of competition, with a truly international field. The audience had thinned out after day one, but it has to be said that they missed some super lifting.

At 52 Ireland's Barry Crowley had a day of mixed fortunes, but made a 152.5 DL after an initial failure – a triple bodyweight lift.

The 67.5 class brought one of the closest competitions of the day. Only 22.5 separated 1st and 3rd places. Cristov Veacelav is an outstanding prospect at just 18 years old. Like all members of the Moldovan team he is also a weightlifter – as evidenced by the terrific quad development and massive squatting power. His 202.5 squat was just over triple bodyweight! After the bench press he had a 10kg lead over England's Peter Bedford, but the latter's powerful finish was enough to turn the tables and take the title. Brendan Cameron (Australia) made a good 215 DL, but he had too much ground to make up to be in serious contention.

At 75 kg we had another Moldovan junior with big quads and a squat to match – Andrei Gutsu got 9 out of 9 to finish on 560, a small margin up on his total at the Moldova Nationals earlier in the year. Tom Meredith (M2) managed to find some fair form despite lifting at less than 2 kgs over the 67.5 limit – whilst fellow team member George Pasmore (M6) also had a good day, making a PB on the dead lift with 130

Teenage lifter Steve Jenkin goes from strength to strength. This time he got all attempts to finish on 570, the highest total of the day at 82.5. Moldovan junior Schimbov has lifted with the WDFPF on two previous occasions. His form this time was well down on his nationals, where he had made 590. Australia's Glenn Stephens started well, but was unlucky to tear a pec on his third bench, which put him out of the frame for top honours. Paul Golding, now lifting at M1, managed to lift in a positive way despite all efforts by noisy neighbours to wreck his sleep a couple of nights previously. Under different circumstances a 520-530 total might have been on the cards. Eric West's squatting is technically spot-on, and beyond dispute where depth is concerned. He was rewarded for his pains

with a new M5 record on this lift on 147.5. Fellow England team member Keith Murdie had a good day, getting 8 from 9 to finish on 430, which included a super dead lift with 180.

The 90 kg class had two members of the sizeable Welsh contingent. Junior Robert Jones ended up with 475 on his international debut, whilst John Williams got all nine attempts to take the overall title. Leading Russia's Nikolay Borisov by just 5 kg at the sub-total stage, John's all-round finishing meant that Borisov had too much work to do to win. The final margin was 25 kgs.

A similar close battle developed in the 100s. Ross Knight (Australia) ran Italy's Carmine Gesualdo very close on both squat and bench press – but the overall gap of 12.5 after the first two lifts was too big for Knight to bridge – and with both lifters getting 275 on the DL the final result was Gesualdo's 647.5 to Knight's 635.

At 110 Ireland's T3 lifter Stephen Fagan had a patchy day. Added experience will surely bring its own rewards, and he can expect to top his 477.5 by 50 kgs or more in the near future. Overall title in this division went as expected, to Les Pilling – who made 8 from 9, just missing a 300 dead lift. Mark Davies (Wales) is mainly known as a big bencher, but at M1 he got all nine lifts to finish on 660. We hope to see another 700+ total from an unequipped lifter ere too long! Leliaert (USA) had a better time on day two, missing only 2 lifts and making a good 257.5 DL into the bargain.

The 125 class had some real depth in the competition. After a couple of terrible world championship experiences in 2001 and 2002, Welshman Pete Sutton had the kind of day he had been hoping for – succeeding with every lift and emerging the winner with 735. England's Graham Crane is much improved, and but for a 20 kg deficit on the bench press would have run the winner very close. His 712.5 was a great effort. Third place man Tony Clark, had a slightly ropey session, and on good form would have given Graham a major run for his money. Future clashes between these three lifters will be worth travelling to see. America's John Dietle came back on the second day and made 9 out of 9 to finish with 670 for fourth place. Jim Horner also lifted faultlessly to a terrific 655, whilst Andy Kuttner topped the 600 mark again, including a fine 260 dead lift.

Outstanding in the over 145s was Ireland's Dave Fitzhenry, who lifted like a man inspired to a 787.5 total. He also won the "best lifter" award in the Unequipped section, a rare feat for the heaviest lifter in any competition. Will the "pride of the Emerald Isle" become the first lifter in the WDFPF to top an 800 "raw" total? It looks likely. Watch this space.

The anticipated clash at 145 between the USA's Rich Edinger and Aussie strongman Derek Boyer, began erratically when Boyer told us that he was nursing an injury. He got as far on the squat as 230 whilst Edinger registered only one lift on 242.5. Boyer benched 190 to Edinger's 165, and at that stage was just 12.5 ahead. Despite his injury he pulled a 305 dead lift, leaving the American needing 320 to win. The weight was duly loaded, but was going nowhere on this occasion.

On behalf of everyone I want to thank all those who worked hard to put this competition together, including organizer Andrey Vendik, and our able interpreter Nikolay Tchekotko. Also Julia Segal, who had the worst job of the day dealing with the several complaints about money and hotel accommodation. Usual thanks to Wim Backelant and Karen for keeping an eye on the paperwork, and to all referees, especially Barry and Marie Crowley for also acting as general troubleshooters at some tricky moments.