

Redefining Strength with Rob Adell

A look at one of America's best hopes for iron game gold

BY KIM GOSS, MS

One of the greatest venues for recruiting talent for the sport of weightlifting is the National High School Power Clean Championships in Las Vegas. Now in its eighth year, this meet has put several outstanding weightlifters in the spotlight, including 2011 USA Weightlifting Senior National Super Heavyweight Champion Pat Mendes. Add another name to this list: Rob Adell.

Adell competed in the 2007 and 2008 competitions in Las Vegas, and in the process he set a national record of 320 pounds in the 207-pound weight class. It was here that John Broz introduced himself, eventually becoming Adell's weightlifting coach. Between Adell's junior and senior years he had improved his power clean by only 10 pounds, but Broz saw that Adell had much more potential. Says Adell, "John told me I could be cleaning over 400 pounds, and I thought that was ridiculous."

It was not ridiculous at all, and in fact Broz has helped Adell exceed many expectations. In training Adell has snatched 379 pounds, has clean and jerked 462 pounds, and in one remarkable training session cleaned 440 pounds for 10 singles. His best back squat is 622, and his best front squat is 529. He can also run and jump on a world-class level, having vertical jumped 42 inches (no step) and achieved 4.40 in the forty.

After high school Adell lifted with Broz at his Las Vegas gym, which is called Average Broz's Gymnasium, a name inspired by the Average Joe's Gym featured in the movie *DodgeBall*. As for Broz's background, when he was 28, Broz met Antonio Krastev, who guided his training and influenced his current coaching philosophy. Krastev was a Bulgarian weightlifter who in 1987 snatched 476 pounds (216 kilos), a record that has yet to be matched.

One of Adell's first training

partners was Pat Mendes, a two-time winner of the National High School Power Clean Championships. "Pat was fully committed to lifting, whereas I was more focused on football," says Adell. Broz notes that both Mendes and Adell were talented, but Adell had better flexibility and "feel" for the bar.

Strong Beginnings

Adell was born in New York, and his family moved to Las Vegas when he was seven. Adell was always athletic, and his primary sport was football. He did wrestle "as something to keep in shape," but when he broke his collarbone, "that ended that." Adell says he was always strong, and he started lifting weights when he was 14, primarily bench presses and squats – doing what he called a "football workout."

Once Adell started hitting the iron, he saw that he was able to gain strength much faster than his teammates. "I just enjoyed lifting weights, and I never missed a workout." The result of his



Photos by John Broz

talent, hard work and consistency was that by the time he was 15, he could power clean 290 pounds at a body-weight of just 180.

As a junior in high school, Adell entered the National High School Power Clean Championships. “My high school coaches felt that I could do well in that competition,” says Adell. And it should be noted that he was doing full cleans, whereas his teammates were doing power cleans. “I just figured I could do more weight using this technique, and I had a natural bottom position, so I dropped down to a full squat.” By the end of high school, Adell could clean 340 pounds and squat 460 – but due to an injury that prevented him from squatting in his senior year, that 460 was done as a junior.

One of the first things you will notice when you see Adell is that he is heavily muscled – and in fact is probably the most physically impressive weightlifter in the US (already bodybuilding magazines have requested physique photos of him). Adell says his muscle comes from just doing the Olympic lifts and squatting, plus some residual mass from his high school football workouts – he doesn’t do any specific bodybuilding exercises as part of his training. Much of Adell’s muscularity can be attributed to the high volume of training he puts in on the platform, plus a clean diet that is high in protein – he says his “carbs come primarily from vegetables.” And perhaps genetics plays a role, as Adell’s father is 6-foot-3, and when he played hockey (as a defenseman) he weighed 230 pounds and could bench press “raw” 450 pounds – his son’s best bench press is 425.

Adell attended Green Valley High School in Henderson, Nevada, where he graduated with a 3.3 GPA. “Our football team had some good athletes, but we had too many holes in it to be a powerhouse.” To fill the holes, Adell



Adell is one of America’s best hopes for medals in international competitions. His best lifts include a 379-pound snatch and a 462-pound clean and jerk.

would play safety, lineman and fullback – one highlight is that in his senior year he averaged 14 tackles a game.

Adell was offered football scholarships at several lower division colleges, but his goal was to play at the Division I level. For economic reasons, he decided to become a walk-on at UNLV (University of Nevada at Las Vegas), as it was close to home. He played running back and fullback, but after the first season he dropped out. “At that time it would have been incredibly difficult to make the team, plus the progress I was making in the weight-room with John made it more feasible to focus on a weightlifting career.”

Getting Strong: Bulgarian Style

When he started working with Broz, Adell was a bit skeptical about the Bulgarian-inspired approach Broz was using. “I asked Coach Broz how often we would max out on the lifts, thinking like once a month, and he said I would max out every day – and he also said I would squat every day. And that my body would just adapt.” Currently, Adell lifts twice a day during the week: 90 minutes in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. On Saturday and Sunday, he has a two-hour session once each day.

Adell’s first major USA Weightlifting-sanctioned competition



was the 2010 Junior Nationals in February, and he had his hands full with future Senior World Team member Jared Fleming. Adell snatched 308

pounds to Fleming’s 313. Adell clean and jerked 363 on his second attempt, and Fleming finished with 374. Adell easily cleaned 388.5 pounds for the win, but missed the jerk. Adell is not one to make excuses, but it should be noted that a wrist injury from football was affecting his lifting at the time.

Adell and Fleming would meet up again in December 2010 at the American Open Championships. In this meet Adell snatched 324 on his second attempt, and then attempted a 335 Junior American record on his third – because he had turned 20, this was his last opportunity to break a junior record. Adell secured it solidly overhead, but says he felt his knee shift at the bottom, tearing his meniscus. “When I tried to stand up with it, I felt it tearing even more, so I had to drop it behind me.” The doctors said that Adell was “lucky” in the sense that he did not tear the ACL, and they expected a full

recovery. After an operation to repair the tear, Adell took a very conservative approach to rehabilitation, extending it to six months, as he wanted to make certain it was healed completely. In retrospect, Adell says that going into the competition there might have already been a tear in the meniscus, which probably came from football.

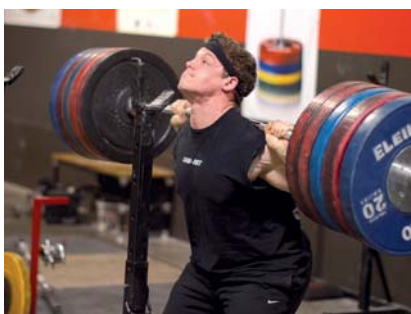
Adell’s clean has always been ahead of his jerk, primarily because he did not train the jerk in high school. “But my jerk is improving a lot, and now it is just about equal to my clean.” As such, Adell’s emphasis is on increasing his leg strength, primarily his back squat.

As for any skeptics out there who question Adell’s rapid progress, note that he was drug tested in two national competitions and was also on the list for out-of-competition testing. “There are a lot of accusations about drug use, and I want your readers to know that I am drug-free,” says Adell. “I have been tested a lot, and was even tested immediately after I tore my meniscus at the American Open. I couldn’t stand by

myself, so I had to be propped up and had to have someone help me pee – it was very embarrassing.”

In terms of role models for lifting, Adell says he has three: former West German Olympic champion Rolf Milser, three-time Greek Olympic champion Akakios Kakiavilis (whose technique Adell says his own technique resembles), and his coach John Broz (who at age 39 snatched 336 pounds and clean and jerked 385 pounds, and at age 42 in training snatched 319 pounds, just 11 pounds under the world record in the masters division).

Adell is currently attending UNLV, majoring in biology with the plan to eventually become a medical doctor. His next major competition is the Senior Nationals, where he should again face Fleming plus last year’s champion, Jon North. As for long-term goals, he wants to win the 2014 World Championships and the 2016 Olympics, and along the way break some world records. At the pace he is going, Rob Adell is right on track to do just that. **BS**



Adell is as strong as he looks, being able to back squat 622 pounds and front squat 529 pounds.

