

# Don't Let the *Deadlift Die*

Why the deadlift should be a part of any strength program

BY **KIM GOSS, MS**

Photo by Karim Ghonem, ©Poliquin Performance.  
Education

A former strength coach at Miami University of Ohio, Ryan Faehnle is a strength coach who still “walks the talk” by staying in shape with heavy deadlifts.



Often a specific weight training exercise is associated with one individual. The first Mr. Olympia, Larry Scott, attributed much of his bulging biceps development to the preacher curl, and the exercise is now commonly called the Scott curl. Strongman Paul Anderson, who won gold as a weightlifter in the 1956

Olympics, popularized the back squat by hoisting poundages that few can match to this day. On the other hand, the deadlift has had many champions – let's look at a few.

The absolute world record is Benedikt Magnusson, a strongman from Iceland who pulled 1,015 pounds in the straight-bar, two-handed deadlift.

Photo by Karim Ghonem, ©Poliquin Performance, model Mary-Pier Gaudet.



The hex bar deadlift is a variation that places more stress on the legs and less on the lower back.

Other pioneering deadlifters include Vince Anello, who in the 1970s became the first man under 200 pounds bodyweight to deadlift 800; Lamar Gant, who in 1985 became the first man to deadlift five times his bodyweight; and Ed Coan, who at 220 pounds became the lightest man to deadlift 900 pounds. And Arnold's best friend, former Mr. Olympia Franco Columbu, reportedly lifted 750 pounds at a bodyweight of 185 pounds, a lift that far exceeded the world record deadlift at the time. All these men are impressive, but any list of the greatest deadlifters of all time will include Bob Peoples.

Peoples was born on August 2, 1910, in northern Tennessee. With all the heavy chores he did growing up on a farm, he was always strong. Other than having a few dumbbells for workouts, Peoples improvised with his own homemade equipment. One such apparatus was a pair of 50-gallon barrels joined with a metal pipe. He would fill the barrels with rocks and use them to deadlift by standing on platforms of varying heights that served as a power rack. He would also position the pipe across his back and take a walk, in the same way a strongman today would use the Super Yoke apparatus.

People's training equipment was bizarre, and his technique was definitely unconventional. To improve his leverage he lifted in socks, and he rounded his back and exhaled as he deadlifted. In 1935, at the age of 25, he deadlifted 500 pounds, and five years later he did 600. Six years later, at a bodyweight of 175 pounds, Peoples pulled a world record of 651-1/4 pounds at 175 pounds bodyweight. In 1947 he became the first man to deadlift 700, and on March 5, 1949, in a competition in Johnson City, Tennessee, he hit 725-1/2 pounds at 178 pounds bodyweight,

a world record that stood for over two decades. As a comparison, consider that the current world record is 793.7 pounds. Peoples also could clean 290 pounds, squat 530, press 110-pound dumbbells for 10 reps, and deadlift 500 pounds for 20 reps.

### The Deadlift Advantage

Although BFS prefers the hex bar deadlift over the straight-bar deadlift, both are excellent lifts and either can be used in the BFS program. Unfortunately, the deadlift has lost favor in the strength coaching community, but here are a few reasons it should be brought back.

First, consider that although the squat is still the king of exercises, the deadlift works many of the same muscles – and then some. In the deadlift, the forearm muscles must work hard to hold the bar, and the trapezius and abdominal muscles are also strongly affected.

Next, the deadlift is relatively easy to master, and compared to the Olympic lifts and the squat, it's much easier to perform higher reps. Whereas in squatting, flexibility issues can make it a challenge to perform that exercise, especially for tall athletes, those limitations are not a factor in deadlifting. It's also a more practical exercise in that it doesn't require spotters or any special equipment other than a barbell, plates and a platform. And because the athlete lifts the weight from the floor, as opposed to supporting a barbell on the shoulders, it's easier to motivate athletes to go all-out on the lifts. At BFS clinics, our clinicians often hold a deadlift challenge, and it's always amazing how many personal records athletes break when they are encouraged by their teammates.

Finally, consider that there are many types of deadlifts. To more

strongly affect the quadriceps and hamstrings, an athlete can stand on a low platform, which increases the range of motion. A wide stance can be used, a style called sumo, which more strongly affects the muscles that adduct (pull in) the legs. The lift also can be performed in a power rack, with the bar placed at various heights using the crossbars, to overload specific areas of the movement. BFS has found that heavy box squats can be performed prior to an

athletic competition without affecting performance; likewise, deadlifts in a power rack working the end range of the movement can perform the same function.

The deadlift won't replace the squat or power clean in a strength workout, but it's a remarkably effective exercise that will make any strength program better. If you give this lift a chance, you're likely to become a die-hard fan of the deadlift. **BFS**

## All-Time Best Deadlifts

### Men's Records

BWT	Weight (pounds)	Year	Name	Country
114	573.2	1993	Sajeeva Bhaskaran .....	India
123	639.3	1992	Lamar Gant.....	US
132	683.4	1988	Lamar Gant.....	US
148	705.5	1992	Dan Austin.....	US
165	793.7	1980	Oleksandr Kutcher.....	Ukraine
181	793.7	1995	Giovanni Brunazzi .....	Italy
198	859.8	1985	Ed Coan .....	US
220	901.7	1991	Ed Coan .....	US
242	892.9	2006	Yuriy Fedorenko .....	Russia
275	948.0	2006	Konstantin Konstantinovs .....	Latvia
308	939.2	2009	Konstantin Konstantinovs.....	Latvia
SHW	1,015.0	1984	Benedikt Magnusson .....	Iceland

### Women's Records

BWT	Weight (pounds)	Year	Name	Country
97	264.6	2003	Wei-Ling Chen .....	Chinese Taipei
105	288.8	2009	Wei-Ling Chen.....	Chinese Taipei
114	446.4	2009	Yi-Ju Chou .....	Chinese Taipei
123	490.5	1995	Carrie Boudreau .....	US
132	518.1	2004	Maria Revva.....	Russia
148	556.7	2007	Priscilla Ribic .....	US
165	584.2	1999	Elana Zhukova-Soukhorouk .....	Ukraine
181	590.8	1999	Coral Blair .....	Austria
198	604.0	1988	Dawn Reshel-Sharon.....	US
SHW	683.4	2005	Becca Swanson.....	US



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