

How To Run A Weight Meet

Many schools are now becoming involved in weight lifting meets. More states having state tournaments. I think it's a great thing and should provide extra motivation and incentive. However, some problems have come about. During some meets, I've heard from both parents and athletes, "I'm never coming to another meet in my life. What a rip-off." Obviously, this is not the reaction you want. Most of the problems in high school ironically stem from trying to follow A.A.U. rules and judges. In Utah, I started the State High School Championships and the first year we had 27 participants. The second year it grew to 200 participants with 1,000 paid spectators. The third year 300 participants came from this sparsely populated state. The following guidelines are strongly recommended especially at the high school level.

Events: A normal Power Lifting Meet uses the squat, bench press and dead lift. These are the events of most school meets. Some schools will challenge each other in a dual meet on just one event like the bench press. Olympic meets consist of the snatch and the clean and jerk. However, the olympic lifts are very difficult technique lifts and usually don't work too well at the high school level. Some meets will use a combination, like squat, bench press and clean. For informal meets with some close-by area schools any combination of events is fine. For big meets like a state championship, then I prefer the three power lifts.

Weight Classes: This is where using A.A.U. rules really causes problems. A.A.U. weight classes: 114, 123, 148, 165, 181, 198, 220, 242, 275, HWT. These just don't work especially in high school. There are too many upper weight classes and from 132 to 198, the crucial range in high school, the weight classes are too far apart. Here are three better alternatives.

1. Modified A.A.U. weight classes: 114 (optional), 123, 132, 140, 148, 157, 165, 173, 181, 189, 198, HWT.
2. Use high school wrestling weight classes.
3. Use B.F.S. weight classes (3 states currently use these for their state meet) 115, 125, 135, 145, 155, 165, 175, 185, 200, HWT.

Awards: Athletes, especially at the high school level, like medals as much or better than trophies. This brings your cost to put on a meet down considerably.

Schedule: Going to a power lifting meet, even a big national A.A.U. meet, can be a horrendous experience for the spectator and even the lifter himself. Here is a typical meet: weigh-in, 11:00 a.m.; lifting starts, 12:30 p.m.; lifting is completed at midnight. Thirteen hours! Obviously, the average spectator will not ever want to get hooked into going to a marathon like that again. Believe me, many public relation problems are caused by the A.A.U. method of conducting a meet. Since high schools and colleges are not A.A.U.-ruled bodies, they are free to readily improve on a bad structure and system. I have competed in nearly 100 A.A.U. meets and even directed a

National A.A.U. competition. This has given me plenty of experience on how to help you improve school meets.

I strongly recommend to have preliminaries and finals. The preliminaries would include the Bench Press and the Squat. The top four or six lifters would make the finals and earn the right to compete in the Dead Lift. The prelim's could start at 12:30 in the gym, and the finals at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium. By using the 10 B.F.S. weight classes and taking six into the finals, the Dead Lift competition can be completed and all winners determined by 10:00 p.m. Awards can be given for the top three or five places. Team trophies can be given with points awarded as follows: 12 points for first, 9 points for 2nd, 7 points for 3rd, 5 points for 4th, 3 points for 5th, and 1 point for 6th.

Spectators, athletes and coaches have already participated in and are familiar with a preliminary-final system (track, wrestling, swimming, etc.). So it is quite natural to everyone.

But what about a lifter who is poor at the bench press and squat, but dynamite in the dead lift? Tough, he better get better in the bench press and squat so he can make the finals. However, experience has shown this is a very minor problem. A person who wants to stay for the whole meet can do so, but most will just want to come to the finals. Sitting in an auditorium for just 2½ hours can provide a setting for a great experience by all. There is also a certain amount of pride to be felt by making the finals or even almost making the finals. This system could also be adopted by A.A.U. meet directors without changing existing rules.

Rules: I went to an A.A.U. meet and a 16-year-old boy was benching in his first meet. He struggled magnificently with 240 pounds and made it. The crowd cheered and his father jumped for joy. The three A.A.U. judges smiled and gave him 3 red lights (lift is no good). You see, the boy moved his right foot 2 inches during the lift. The crowd jeered, the father swore, the mother cried, the boy hung his head and the coach said, "never again."

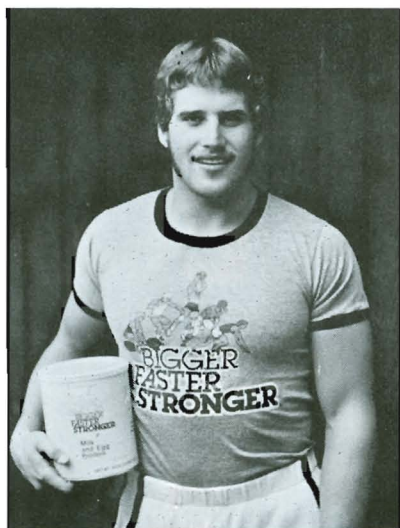
There are just too many little rules for disqualification in A.A.U. Powerlifting to be a good thing in school meets. Don't we have high school rules and standards for other sports? Why not in power lifting? I strongly recommend the following rules for high school and even college.

Squat: The lifter must squat down until his thighs are at least slightly below parallel. (No waiting for signals by a judge)

Bench: No arching permitted. The bar must touch the chest and come up evenly. (No waiting for a clap by a judge)

Dead Lift: Any way the bar can be brought to an upright position is legal. (Hitching is legal)

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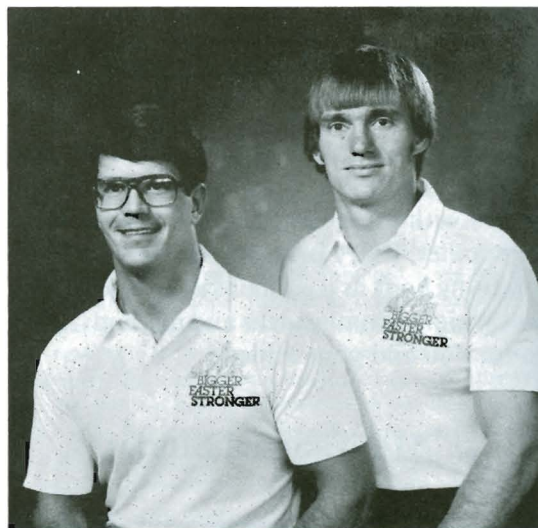
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Judges: A real big hassle in organizing a meet is trying to find qualified A.A.U. judges. Ones that really know the rules. Finding 3 judges or 6 judges for a two-platform meet can be next to impossible. Now with the above rules, that is no longer a problem. In fact, I recommend only one judge per platform. It takes one man to call balls and strikes, not a committee. We have one ref in wrestling. Why not one in powerlifting and with the above rules it's a cinch. Be careful to put the best man on the squat for that is where the most controversy is likely. Now, you can have 3 or more platforms. In one meet, I had 10 platforms in the prelims and with the above rules it went smooth and simple.

Procedure: For the prelims (the squat and the bench press) do warm-up attempts right on the platform. The weight will be gradually increased and the lifter can have as many successful attempts as he wishes. Each successful

lift is recorded. The judge can help the lifters during the lighter attempts. A lifter may do up to five reps when it's his turn, but only the first rep will be judged. When a lifter misses two consecutive attempts, he is through for that event. Also, make sure you operate with pounds not kilos.

For the finals (the dead lift) warm-ups should be done back stage and only 3 total attempts are given each lifter. Under the spotlight on stage in the auditorium is an exciting place to do the dead lift. In case of a tie, the winner is determined by who had the lighter body weight at weigh-in.

Meets can be a great way to work for something in the off-season—a place to see how youngsters compete—a way to develop team pride, spirit, enthusiasm and, oh yes, to have fun. I am available, schedule permitting, to help with any meet in the country. Also, it is a possibility to hold a B.F.S. Clinic in conjunction with a meet. Anyway, good luck!