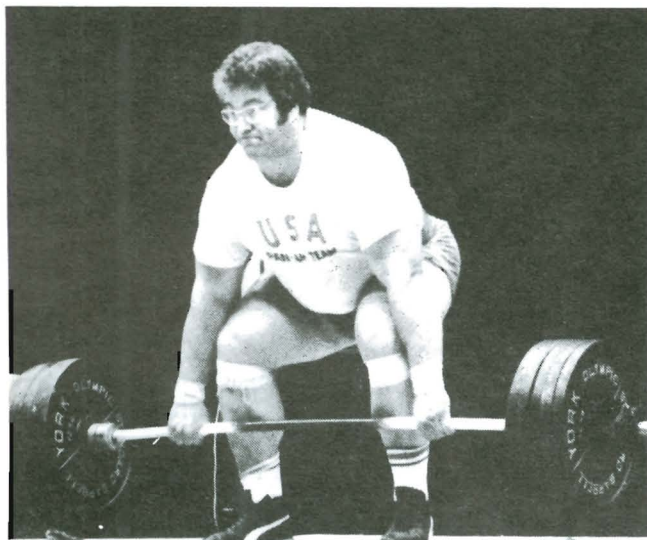


# KEN PATERA

## HISTORY'S STRONGEST ATHLETE

Story by  
Greg Shepard



**Patera Successfully Cleans and Jerks 501**

Ken played football at Cleveland High School in Portland, Oregon and wrestled heavyweight at 193 pounds. However, Track and Field was his first love and he ran the high hurdles and high jumped, but a serious ankle injury forced him to switch to the shot put and discus in high school. Ken graduated from high school in 1961, so the only lifting he did was at home. He was inspired by Norm Schemansky at age 9 and that stuck in his head for years. Schemansky was a U.S., World and Olympic Champion in weightlifting in the 1950's. Ken had access to a 110-pound home set at age 13 and at age 15 he could Clean and Press the 110 pounds with each hand. When he graduated from the eighth grade, Ken could already dunk a basketball at a 5'9" height. Since this was still in the 1950's, athletes didn't weight train. Ken was the only athlete in school to lift weights.

At age 16, Patera could press 220 pounds and bench press 285 pounds. To illustrate the primitive conditions existing at this time, Patera didn't know a bench was supposed to have supports to rest the weight to do the bench presses. He therefore rolled 285 pounds from his hips to his chest and then benched it. We've come a long way, haven't we?

*Probably the best story on explosive power comes from Ken Patera. I call Ken "History's Strongest Athlete." I realize many might argue someone else is "History's Strongest Athlete." However, any other candidate must be great at other sports besides weight lifting and beat the following list of Patera's best lifts: You be the judge.*

*Incline Press 47°: 485 x 2*

*Rack Press: 552*

*Press: 506*

*Power Clean: 501*

*From Hang: 486 x 3*

*Chest High High Pulls: 770*

*Squat: 820 x 2 (no wraps or suit)*

*Front Squat: 625*

*Bench Press: never did, but one time he was "goofing around" and did 560 like a feather*

*Snatch: 387 official*

*402 training*

*Overhead Squat with*

*Snatch Grip: 480*

*Clean and Jerk: 506 official*

*518 training*

After high school, Ken became serious on an off-and-on basis. He broke Doug Hepburn's Clean and Jerk record by two pounds with a 374 pound effort. Then Hepburn said the wrong thing. "Hey kid, you'll never break my press record of 381 pounds!" Ken was to break this record by 125 pounds!!!

Ken was still interested in throwing the shot put in college and became an olympic alternate with a heave of 64'7". Later, he would get 66 feet and at a body weight of 330 pounds had many training throws of 69 feet.

Then in 1969, Patera made an important decision. This decision was to be the World's Strongest Man. It was in this year he won the Jr. Nationals in Olympic Lifting and beat Joe Dube, a silver medalist, in the Sr. Nationals. The next two years Ken was really flying as he won the Senior Nationals and won 4 gold medals in the Pan Am Games. Now, 1972 was to be his year as he won the Senior Nationals again and the Olympic trials in his quest to be the "World's Strongest Man."

... continued on page 34



**GOING**



**GOING**



**GONE: the only American to press  
500 plus!**

## ***Ken Patera: History's Strongest Athlete (Con't from page 8)***

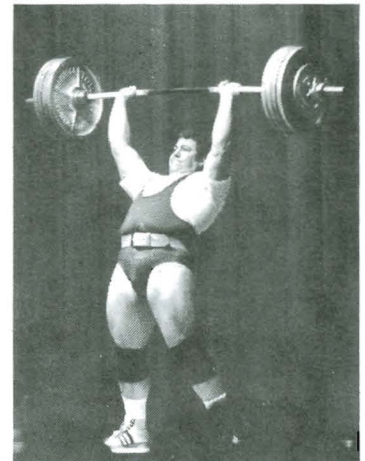
The Russians and, in particular, Alexeev, their super heavyweight, were in awe of Patera's massive build and strength. At 6'1", he carried his 330 pounds with grace and anyone who saw him dunk a basketball suspected Patera to be from another planet. This was done flatfooted without a step or a run. Patera, of course, did not have the same advantage of length of training or political and financial backing as did the Russians or East Germans. Oh, how they did marvel as Ken seemed destined to shatter the world records by his efforts in training sessions in Munich, Germany, the site of the 1972 Olympic Games.

Then, from out of nowhere, the Games were shattered by terrorists. Storming the Olympic village, terrorists went after the Israel olympic team and held team members as hostages. When the debacle was finally over, the weight lifting event had been postponed several days. Patera was ready when the event was supposed to have been scheduled. He had peaked for just the right moment. Hindsight is easy and Patera should have said, "OK, I'm thrown off schedule. I'd better open a little lighter just to make sure." Well, he didn't. He went after the gold, the record and the title with what he'd planned on doing from the start. Ken Patera "bombed out." Which means, he missed all three of his

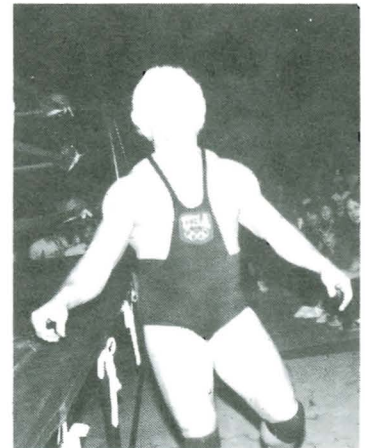
allotted attempts on the snatch. No medals, no title and a dream gone.

What was Patera going to do now? Train hard for another 4 years and try again. How noble a thought. Unfortunately, in this country, Ken couldn't live off noble aspirations. he had to make a living. Because of his great athletic ability, he decided to accept offers and go into professional wrestling. Most top stars make a six figure income, and Ken has been a top star for years now.

The Ken Patera of 1982 looks great at a trim and lean 254 body weight. Because of his hectic schedule in wrestling, serious training is difficult. He benches only twice a month, but can still manage to do 460 pounds. He does 8 to 10 sets of 3 reps on the squat with 405 pounds. Amazingly, Ken can still jump up and grab the basketball rim with both hands at age 38. Ken is a man at peace with himself. In spite of how he comes across to people in the ring, he is a very kind and considerate person. His life revolves around his wife and little girl. What are sports really all about? To me, it is giving us a chance to physically excel and preparing us to be happy and successful in the real world. Ken Patera, by my definition, has achieved this and has left us with a legacy of unparalleled greatness in strength.



*Patera Pressing 1971*



*1982 Patera the Wrestler*

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