

There are always those inevitable hypotheticals that get thrown around the room following a great athletic competition. The comparisons between the "Thens, and the Nows." The "who would win between" questions. The "What would happen if you" ... put Jordan in his prime on a team against Chamberlain at his prime, or had Tyson in his prime vs. Joe Lewis in his prime. Or as powerlifters, someone might ask how a 220 lb. Ernie Frantz in his prime vs. a Chuck Vogelpohl today would play out. Well, no sooner would you have settled on the ultimate powerlifting match up of the generations when inevitably you would begin to hear the verbal thrust and parry of double-ply now, and single-ply then, and training programs now, and programs then, supplements now, and supplements then. This is what I have been reading in the last two PL USA opinion sections.

Let's take a snapshot inventory of the evolution of some of the sports as their records and/or progress seem at first glance to be related to the improvement of the equipment within that sport. Look at a pole vaulter back in the 50's riding some bamboo type pole vs. the high tech pole that literally catapults the vaulter into the air some 19'. Or the clap-skate skater now whose times destroy Bonnie Blair's once thought untouchable records of 10 years ago. Or you can even look at an Indy car from this year's 500 vs. a champion car from the 1940s. Ultimately you can look at Flo Jo's 100 meter dash and how her time was significantly faster than Gold Medalist Jessie Owens' 100 time. Does that mean the equipment and training is so much better than "back in the day?" Or, is it that perhaps the pool to draw athletes from is so much bigger? Or is the nutrition and supplementation so much more

## OPINION

effective? Has the human being simply improved that much over the last 50 years? Why is it then that powerlifters are setting numbers that are so much higher than "back in the day?"

Or is that even a fair question? It is inevitable that the numbers will continue to go up, but what we as powerlifters must focus on when we ask these types of questions is that we lift in a specific time frame along the eternal timeline of this great sport that has become such a vital part of our lives, regardless of federation/equipment. We have to realize that when Ernie Frantz was competing, he was using the same equipment as the other competitors of his day, but what made Ernie the best of that generation was not simply the utilization of that era's specific equipment. Chuck Vogelpohl is in the same boat. Everyone Chuck competes against uses modern equipment like Chuck such as a Monolift and modern wraps and squat suits, but not everyone in the 220 lb. class is squatting a grand. So much for equipment in and of itself being the reason a person becomes a champion.

The bottom line is that generationally speaking, what made a champion like a Frantz decades ago is the same thing that makes a Vogelpohl a champion today. It is not the equipment, or the nutrition or supplements, but it is the drive to go beyond what your body is capable of doing, and being just so much better than your peers of the same generation. Ernie Frantz in 1997 when he was already 63 years old

set yet another WPC World Record. Ernie squatted 820 lbs at 220 lbs. at 63. Ernie at 30 years old, or Ernie in his 50s or Ernie today who still squats 700 at 73 years of age in the 198 lb. class has the same inner strength that continues to drive him past barriers that the body might have you stop at. Among his peers, Ernie is still the best. Although Ed Coan is a long way from 60, he is right at the door of 45 and his knee injury aside, is doing some of the heaviest squatting of his life, not to mention in the history of powerlifting in his weight class. Chuck straps a grand on his back to sit down and can stand back up because he uses all the tools in his powerlifting tool box to his advantage; hard work, intensity, smart training, determination, incredible natural power and explosiveness, and an unmatched drive to be the best he can be.

Champions during their heyday have all the advantages and disadvantages that other non-champions have who are lifting in the same timeframe on the powerlifting timeline. So, perhaps some 50 years from now, when people in the 220 lb. class might routinely be squatting 1125 lbs., no one should question how then 80 year old Chuck Vogelpohl would stack up against this kid from the year 2052. It is apples and oranges, squat rack vs. monolift, polyester vs. double-ply, and APF vs. USAPL. Better yet, take all the guys who are Frantz' age and put them into today and put Coan and Vogelpohl and Mikesell back in "the day." Not a

surprise that Ernie would be the guy today, and Coan, Vogelpohl and Mikesell would be the legends of the golden age of powerlifting.

Being the best within your time, powerlifting federation and social setting is simply being the best. Let us never minimize the great feats of power the men and women of yesterday achieved by comparing them to today's numbers. Of equal importance, never contribute someone's success today to some super squat suit or super knee wraps. We all climb up on one another's shoulders to become better than the folks before us.

Remember, someone had to break the four minute mile, an accomplishment many thought was physically impossible. Today there have been high school students who have achieved that very 'impossibility'.

Someone has to be the first to set a record ... and as history has taught us, someone has to break that record. Powerlifting is a sport that is less than 100 years old as it stands in its present form. We are still settling into records as the sport grows, as equipment changes and all federations have differences. Records will continue to be broken in all federations, be it USAPL, or the APF, and men and women will continue to get stronger. Thus is the nature of mankind and the powerlifter, continual improvement.



**Eric Maroscher ... 2-Time WPC World Powerlifting Champion**

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