

2018 Classic World Powerlifting Championships preview

Josh Greenfield



A short interview with Josh Greenfield ahead of the upcoming 6th World Men's Classic Championships

How did you first get into powerlifting?

Powerlifting was a bit of a weird one for me. I actually first entered into a strongman competition. I hadn't really lifted any weights for about two years because I was MMA fighting. I entered the strongman competition about four days before the event just because one of my friends had posted on Facebook that some of the lifters had dropped out, and asked if anybody fancied doing it. I don't drink anymore but I'd actually been out drinking the night before. One of the main events was the squat, everybody was about 140-150kg in bodyweight and I was about 98kg and still pretty hung-over, but I ended up squatting 250kg, coming 3rd in the squat. For the other events, I gave it my best but I wasn't really that good at them.

Then the guy that owned the gym, Crunch Gym in Meanwood, suggested that I take up powerlifting. And literally from then on I spent about 5,6,7 hours a day there, beating away and trying to get my squat, bench, and deadlift stronger. It literally took off from there and became my life.

What's your training like now?

Training now is completely different to how training used to be. I remember the guys that I first ever started training with, in-between sets and stuff they'd actually go outside for a cigarette! And then come back in and I was like what! I'd go and stand outside with them and think that it was so weird.

We used to turn up to training, we'd say what we were doing, squat, bench, deadlift, back then because they were strongmen I trained overhead press as well in a push-press day. We'd literally just hit a heavy single and then we'd back off and do a couple of doubles or triples. Then we used to do loads of bodybuilding work, and then if we were bored or if we'd have time we'd do some events because they wanted to lift atlas stones and stuff like that.

But now my training is very scheduled. I'll only train Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. There's no way in hell that that will change, these are set days for me. It's a little bit of an OCD thing, I can't physically train on a Tuesday, Thursday, or a Sunday. To me that's not in my pattern, my life runs around my training. I don't work on Monday, I just take the whole day off just because it's my biggest session of the week and the first session of the week. I just relax, I make sure I'm getting my food in, and get to training earlier than everyone else, I kind of just get everything done. My life pretty much revolves around the training.

I'm actually coached by last year's World champion, European champion, Commonwealth champion, and British champion, Mark Macqueen. The schedule is pretty tough, I bench at the moment 3 times a week, I squat twice a week. I deadlift just once a week because I've just come back from a bit of an injury leading up to Worlds, but I'm okay now. I think I've probably deadlifted maybe three times properly in the last 8-10 weeks and my deadlift is stronger than it ever has been.

How are you feeling going into the Worlds?

I'm feeling really really good. Leading up to the British Squads that we had after nationals I took a bit of an injury. I was a little bit dubious about taking my spot for Worlds, it was actually my lower back and glute medius that was holding me back. I didn't squat heavy for a long time, I couldn't deadlift, couldn't do anything like that so I was a little but dubious about taking my place. I ended up going to Squads and my back went pretty much on the first deadlift I did. The coaches came up to me and said that I didn't have to hit my top set but I'd have to remember that there could be chancers coming to take my place. I spoke to my coach Mark and said, that this was the ultimatum that they gave me. I don't have to pull it because they don't want me to get injured but there is a slight chance that they might take somebody else because they need to look at me in the next eight weeks to see if I'm fit. So I go out there and I pull it and I save my place.

I pulled 255kg like it was a maximal as my last warm-up and all I had to pull was 275kg. I literally ended up crying because my back hurt that much, I got so wound up and I let out all of the emotions because this is what I'd been working for. I pulled 275kg, and that was a lift like shit, I didn't get my body right.

Now leading into it, I'm peaking, I'm overreaching, and I just feel tired. I'm working, I feel fatigued, I've got an eight week old child as well, so I'm on and off with my sleep, my sleeping pattern is not brilliant at the moment. Yeah just generally feeling tired, I just want to get out there now and get my weight down and hit the platform, man. I want to go at it.

Do you have any targets in mind for Canada; are you looking towards a Squat medal?

Yeah so we have a couple of goals in mind. I know realistically, as this is my first year as a Senior, coming into this strong category of the 105s I'm not going to get into the top three. I'm not going to hit the top five unless somebody bombs, so the real goal isn't on overall placing. I'd like to beat the guy from Ireland [Barry Pigott] and the guy from Japan [Takeda Yusuke], so I'd like to hit the top six, following the likes of Bryce Lewis and Krzysztof Wierzbicki, and Bryce Krawczyk, but the main goal for me is the world record squat.

This is what I want to do. I remember when Steven Manuel squatted the world record and everything blew up. I just want to do the same again, I want to turn up and take Steven Manuel's European squat record, I want to take his British squat record and I want to take the guy from Peru's world record squat. At the moment it's at 335kg, and we're looking to go 336kg for the new world record, that's my only goal. There is a chance of Cameron St. Amand in the junior 105s breaking the world record squat around five days before I lift. If that actually happens and he pushes the world record to 337.5, I'm happy to just leave it. I'll come and try to take it if I get invited to the Arnold, but yeah if he pushes it to 337.5kg I won't even give it a shot.

Just because the gold medal for me- to stand on that centre podium just once as my first year as a senior 105, that is the ultimate goal. I've got to be number one on that squat. I've put the marker down so many times to my friends and my family. I've said that I'm the best 105s squatter in the world and nobody is going to out-squat me. I want to see myself stood on that centre podium, just for the squat. Obviously not on the placings for the total. If that were to happen, something has got to go badly wrong, somebody has got to die on the day.

Yeah so that world record squat is the one that I'm looking for. I've been hunting it for at least the last two years. At the time when I first saw it, the junior world record squat and the open record were the actually the same, it was held by the same guy, and then Steve Manuel took it to 331.5kg, and then Garrett Blevins took it to 332.5kg. And then some guy randomly in December from Peru took it, in his last IPF meet -because obviously they're not in the IPF anymore, he ended up taking the world record squat to 335kg. So he's upped it but I'm happy to go 336kg for a new world record.

After all of the hype last year, how are you feeling about being involved in the battle of the 105s?

Some of the guys that I'll be competing with on the 16th of June, people like Bryce Lewis, Garrett Blevins, and Bryce ... I can't say his last name, I remember seeing them the first year that I got into powerlifting. I think I'd been powerlifting for about nine months and I remember watching Steve and Bryce competing in Texas in 2016. Bryce Lewis had one of the first videos that I'd ever seen, like how to set up for the squat, and now on June 16th I'm actually going to be sharing the platform with these guys.

There's going to be one point on that day where I'm going to stand on the middle podium. Technically I'm going to be beating all of them after the squat, so I'm going to be winning for a duration. That is, until we go into the bench and they all bench 240kg or whatever they're hitting, while I'm at the 400lbs mark. So that's one of the big things for me, that legit makes me so happy.

You hear the phrase- "make your idols your rivals" well they're probably not rivals but they're up there competing on the same stage. And I've seen these guys on Youtube for years, I've followed

them on Instagram, these are the kind of guys that I've been looking up to. I'm going to be there, we're going to be putting on our singlets and going at it against each other, which is cool.

I'm just excited, man. I'm a little bit nervous, just because I know that there's a lot on the line and I know that my bodyweight is very yo-yo. I felt a little bit drained coming into the week because I was away coaching at the All-England Championships at the weekend. So I was drained last Monday; training didn't go to plan, I was supposed to go to 322.5kg on the squat but couldn't, just because I was feeling tired. I had a little niggle in my knee so I just pulled it back and hit a nice steady 305kg squat, and then over the last couple of days I just had a few more carbs and stuff like that. My bodyweight has come back up but it's going to be coming back down over the next few days. I'm just excited overall because I can't wait to get out there now.

How has becoming a coach affected you as a lifter?

So I'm a personal trainer in-person but I'm also a strength coach and I deal with quite a lot of lifters now. Sometimes it can be really good and when people do well it's a really positive buzz. Then sometimes when things aren't going well for your lifters, somebody will text in that something isn't going right. You're not thinking about what you're doing and you want to help them because that's what they pay you for, that's my job. So sometimes it's a little bit difficult that way because it's not always positive, and it's never going to be like that.

I myself do like to be positive towards everything, like let's get in, let's get it done kind of thing, but sometimes it doesn't happen so fluidly for everyone. It's helped me as a lifter to open my eyes to the fact that no two lifters are the same kind of lifter. One of the reasons I offer online coaching is because a lot of people just run these programmes from the internet, like I did myself. They're not specific to you, when I made my training more specific, that's when I really started to grow and that's when I really started to become better as a lifter.

How did you get into coaching?

I literally just started coaching a couple of guys. I developed a squat programme that led me to breaking the 300kg mark, and I kind of wrote everything down that I did to get to that point. I pretty much just put it into an Excel spread sheet, made it look pretty and then I offered it out to two lifters leading it up to the Junior British Championships in 2016. The two lifters that took it were called Jordan Whitlam and Kieran Gray, and I actually still coach Kieran.

When I started coaching him he weighed about 93kg, and he benched about 140kg and squatted about 212.5kg or something, and his deadlift was maybe around 250kg. I remember now that the first thing he said to me was that he wanted to take the Team GB singlet. He said that he wanted to wear it one day, that was a real goal, and for us to hit that together was a really big thing.

But yeah the coaching started because I just handed out free programmes and people started to see results. Being a personal trainer in the fitness industry I decided to create my own selling point of making people strong, and that's kind of like my little niche, that's what I do. That's what I do in-person as well; a lot of my personal training is based around the squat, bench, and deadlift. People that come and have one-to-one sessions with me like the technical sessions. But yeah it all just came out of a 10 week squat cycle that helped me. I gave it to a couple of others and it helped them, they

got real results. I started coaching a couple more people and then thought, do you know what, I'm going to take it out there.

I was doing some online coaching and people just kept coming in dribs and drabs and I coach about 27 lifters now which is good. The thing for me as well is that I try to make it affordable because I know that not everybody can afford to be paying these prices for the premium online coaching. Looking at these big companies, they have more turnover and have more fees to pay and stuff like that. This is literally just me and my desk in the top bedroom of my house, literally just an Excel and I've gone from there pretty much.

Will you be doing any coaching at Worlds or will the focus be solely on you?

I'll get out to Canada on the 10th June and I'll be signing out on the 11th June when I'll be sending all of my programming out. I'll be watching Kieran lift on the 12th but then it's all on me. I'll say my goodbyes to them for the week and then it's game head on. I've got a couple of sessions out there but unfortunately I'm going to have to be a little bit selfish. I know that they all understand, that's the good thing about my lifters, they all understand what I'm going through, they all see the kind of stuff that I'm doing and they'll all be rooting for me which is good.

Are there any people that you're excited to meet in Canada or any specific moments that you're looking forward to?

I remember reading something about Benni Magnússon, he said that before he lifted the world record Log Lift he had thought about the moment over and over and over in his head. He dreamed about it, every moment of his life he was thinking about it. Literally coming up to this time, I'm ten days from flying, I'm sixteen days out, and all that keeps coming through my head is this moment. It will probably be me and Henry Tosh [Team GB head coach], I'll squat 322.5kg as a second attempt, I'll come away from the platform and we're going to kind of look at each other and I'm just going to say "put it on".

The moment that Gino calls out 336kg for a new world record - that literally is going over and over in my head. In my thought process at the moment there is no real actual performance of the lift, after that it's just celebration. I've got the announcement of it on there in my head. I can see myself breaking down because this is literally three years of hard work. I'm going to do what took some people ten years and I'm going to do it in a third of the time.

I haven't met people like Bryce Lewis but the other weekend I spent time with Ray Williams and I ran off of all of his experiences, I picked his brain. I was asking him questions all of the time, I was just intrigued to know what he was thinking. For me it's just going to be all about that moment, the first three squats are literally all I'm turning up for, everything after that is a bonus.

Do you have any goals for after the World Championships?

Yes I do, and I can show you. It's been written on this board for the last seven or eight weeks. I keep this whiteboard just behind my computer. First, the British Men's Classic on 1st-2nd September down in Portsmouth. I want to win it, take a 500+ wilks, squat at least 335kg, 185kg+ bench press, 307.5kg+ deadlift. As a bodyweight goal I want to sit at around 109kg about six weeks out so that I'm a little bit more consistent with my bodyweight a little bit closer to the time.

Worlds is like a nice little privilege for me, it will be nice to be at that kind of level and to be lifting with those kind of lifters but my goal for the year is to turn up and win the British Classic. I don't want people to think that I was just a good junior; I want to turn up and be the best 105 in the country. I want to be known as the guy that came up from the juniors and brought it to the big guys. People ask if I'm ready to step up to the big guys; I won't just step up, I'll f***king demolish them.

That's the real goal for the year. If I win the British Classic then people can't say that you were just a good junior. I'm turning up and the British Classic will be mine. The 2nd September is going to be a dogfight but I'll take it. Going into the Junior nationals last year, a lot of people doubted me. I said that I was going to total 800kg and that I was going to go over 320kg on the squat, and people doubted me. A lot of people said they didn't think that I was going to do it.

I said that you should never doubt me because if you doubt me it makes it worse. That was one of the things that me and Ray spoke about the other week. I mentioned to him something about strongman. I said I'd never go over to it just because I'm not tall enough and he turned round to me and the first thing that he said was "You know what, that would make me want to go even more". It makes me want it because I'm not supposed to do it. So now I'm going to turn up to the British champs and I'm going to do it. You can put anyone in front of me. Apparently the guys who won it last year are going into different weight classes, I say that they're running away from me, haha I'm joking.

So far, what have been your proudest moments as both a coach and a lifter?

My proudest moment as a lifter is winning Junior Nationals, because that is one of the things that I've wanted to do from the start. At my first gym comp I remember that there were a couple of lifters there that were going down to nationals two weeks later. I didn't have a clue but everybody was talking about it, and then I watched it, and I researched it and stuff and said that I would love to win that one day.

I actually missed out on my first nationals in 2016 because I lost to Charlie Wade. That was such a kick in the teeth, man. That was sh*t for me. I came away from that and I said next year nobody will beat me, and I ended up doing just that. So that's probably the biggest achievement for me. Just getting the GB singlet for the first time last year has to be up there because I didn't actually win nationals and take the singlet that way. I came second to Charlie and then Charlie became a senior. It wasn't as pleasing for me as winning nationals, winning nationals was great.

What a day I had, I nearly died that morning making weight. I was in bits, my body was absolutely battered, I could barely walk, I pissed myself, I cried in the sauna, I didn't want to do it, I nearly stopped a few times. Then I made weight, got rehydrated and then just literally took it to everybody. I said that you can't make 50kgs after the squat, I don't care what your deadlift is; you'll never catch me.

As a coach, my biggest moment is definitely getting Kieran his GB singlet. I've coached him now for about a year and a half, maybe two years. And it's just because that was one of the things that he first told me, that he wanted to achieve that. And just helping him and guiding him on his way. On the day that he pulls it on there'll probably be a bit of emotion from me never mind him. That will be a proud moment because he's come from being a little skinny skateboarder kid to an international

powerlifter that's going to bench 212.5kg or more. He's going to win some medals, yeah that's going to be a proud moment.

Josh will be lifting in the Open 105kg Men's class on 16th June at 19:00 (UK time).

