

Strongman Stewart has a

new attitude

Intel Aug 16/96 p. 8 Bel - Biog (collected)

Belleville lifter looks to future with optimism

By Paul Svoboda

The Intelligencer

He's happy and he's healthy. The rest is gravy.

That's the attitude Belleville powerlifter Steve Stewart is taking to the 1996 Paralympic Games which opened last night with official torch-lighting ceremonies in Atlanta at the site of the recent Summer Olympics.

"I'm just glad to be back," says Stewart, making his second Paralympic appearance after his debut in

Barcelona in 1992. "It's just a great experience."

Three years ago, Stewart underwent extensive surgery on both elbows and both shoulders. He didn't know if he'd even be healthy enough to train for Atlanta. Thus the reason for his refreshing approach to the 1996 Games.

"They scraped bone spurs out of my elbows and performed arthroscopic surgery on both shoulders, then discovered I had a torn rotator cuff," says Stewart. "So I was just trying to get competitive again."

Stewart, who competes in the bench press in the amputee division (he lost his right leg below the knee in 1990), credits Toronto surgeon Darryl Ogilvie-Harris for his recovery and return to competition.

"He knew I was serious and

wanted to compete," says Stewart. "He felt like I could. He understands the athlete's mind."

Despite being unable to push a barbell for 12 months following the surgery, Stewart battled back.

"It took another year before I could bench press 225 pounds for 10 reps in training," he says. "It was a long process but eventually I got stronger and now I'm about where I was in '92."

Competing in the 100-kilo weight class in Barcelona, Stewart pressed 155 kilos. This year, he says 170 is a

realistic target.

"I'll need to be pretty close to 370 pounds," he says.

Stewart figures a 480-pound bench press will win the event and he hopes to crack the top-15. Perhaps more important, is his goal to make his Paralympic hat trick appearance in Sydney, Australia in 2000.

"There are a lot of guys competing in their late 30s and early 40s," says Stewart, 34. "You don't have to stop."

For Stewart, that means spending about \$130 a month on vitamin and protein supplements and plenty of hours in the weight room hoisting iron. The issue of drugs — particularly steroid abuse — is not exclusive to able-bodied competitors.

"All I know is that I'm clean,"

says Stewart. "I don't want to throw mud, but you kind of have an idea (who isn't)."

Meanwhile, Stewart says his healthy return from the surgical table isn't the only reason for his positive spin on Atlanta.

"My life is so much better," he says. "I have a better prosthesis, a great career going and a partner in my life. I have more balance."

And, don't forget golf. Stewart has become hooked on the game, playing about three times a week at the Bay of Quinte Country Club.

"I really like it," he says. "But until they make golf a Paralympic sport, I've got to stay in the weight room."



Steve Stewart