

MORRIS, Price

Morris pays Price - Pain equals gain



UP, UP, and UP — Price Morris at the 1972 Olympic trials in Newfoundland.

You no go there," the man barked in broken English. Price Morris could have literally picked him up and thrown the man out of his way, but the

machine gun was a deterrent.

The man holding the gun was a German police officer but a few yards away in another building were the terrorists who were holding the Israeli Olympic team hostage.

That was in Munich, 1972, and weightlifter and Frankford resident Price Morris was representing Canada in the heavyweight division. It was a year holding the best and worst for Morris. He had already done his lifts the day before the terrorists struck and was on his way to breakfast when the machine gun toting policeman stopped him. As events unfolded, Morris learned of the tragic death of an Israeli weightlifter he had trained with prior to the competitions. The athlete was cut in half by a hail of machine gun fire as he valiantly tried to stop the murderers from entering the room.

Back in Canada, Morris's wife heard the news of a heavyweight powerlifter being killed by terrorists at the Olympic games and feared the worst. Neither his name nor nationality were immediately available. Morris returned home early to escape the depressing scene unfolding before him that ended with the cold blooded slaughter of the Israeli athletes.

And while his performance at the games was not as good as he had hoped (22nd out of 26), his performance in the Olympic trials was astonishing.

Morris set Canadian records in powerlifting for all three styles of lifts. The three categories are the bench press, the snatch (in which the athlete heaves the weights over his head in one motion), and the clean and jerk (in which the barbell is raised to the top of the chest in one motion and then thrust above the head with a second motion). Morris snatched 308 pounds, clean and jerked 413 pounds and pressed 375 pounds. Doug Hepburn had held the Canadian record for the press for 16 years before Morris shattered that record.

After the Olympics, Morris retired with more than his share of laurels. Prior to the Olympic games, he won the Canadian Heavyweight Championship five times, taking first place in 1965, '67, '68, '71 and '72. He also participated in the Pan American games in British Columbia in 1967 and the Commonwealth games in Scotland in 1970, where he won a silver medal. At the Pan American games held in Colombia, South America, a year later, Morris took home a bronze medal. In 1988 he was inducted into the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame and his photo now hangs in the Quinte Sports Centre.

During an interview at his Frankford residence, Morris said his interest in weightlifting started early.

"I was born and raised with two big, strong men," he says in reference to neighbors who lived down the road from him. His first exposure to lifting came during high school. Morning exams meant the afternoon off and on one of these usually relaxed afternoons he accepted an invitation to pump iron with a friend. Morris pressed 150 lbs. and clean and jerked 175 lbs. Lifting near your own weight overhead is considered a milestone in weightlifting. Morris, in his first try, had hoisted 175 lbs. He weighed 180 lbs.

With all these accolades, one of Morris's biggest rushes came from lifting before he broke Doug Hepburn's record. It happened in Toronto on Sept. 17, 1967 at the Central Young Men's Christian Association. The event was an international competition between France, Britain and Canada involving three top lifters from each country. Until this point, nobody in Canada had ever successfully done a 400-lb. clean and jerk. Morris held the Canadian record at 396 lbs. but was determined to break that symbolic barrier. Only four pounds stood between Morris and his goal. When the night ended Morris had set a new personal and Canadian record by hoisting 406 lbs. over

his head. "To me, that was a highlight of my lifting career," he says, proudly. "I was really flying high that night."

And Morris's accomplishments were done before steroids were heavily used in sports. In fact, Morris says they were just beginning to come on the scene when he departed the world of competitive sports.

Morris pumped iron three days a week at the Apollo gym and trained at home another three days a week. Add to this the work on the family farm and you have a champion power lifter. Surprisingly, Morris is not a big man by today's standards. He is stocky, with a thick chest and the powerful legs common among his group. But he does not have the overall girth one would expect of a heavyweight lifter.

Although he was injected with cortisone, which is now known to be a steroid, it was not considered one at the time. "I never knowingly took steroids," Morris says emphatically. Instead he stresses nutrition and hard work.

At 49, Morris has begun training again. The myth that athletes are finished at 40 is nonsense, he says. Giving his personal view of the subject, he says, "Strength is like a B.A. degree. Once you've got it, it don't take nothing to carry it around."

Asked whether there is money in the sport, he repies in the negative. "We were amateurs and the word amateur is Latin for 'love of it,'" explains Morris.

Preparations for a new job with the Ministry of Corrections Services is currently cutting into training time but he hopes to compete in the Ontario Masters tournament in February, 1992.

Intell

Remember when ...

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