

Strongman training: part two

From [Strongman training part 1](#) we now know what most of the events are in strongman competitions. Now the important thing to remember is that any promoter can change an event's style and rules at any time. Therefore when you're looking up the specifics for the competition you plan to do, check with the promoter to see:

1. Exactly how each event will be handled and judged.
2. What kind of surface each event will be on (grass, pavement, sand).
3. What equipment will be allowed for each event (often times footwear can vary, shorts vs. pants, wrist/elbow/knee/ankle wraps, chalk/tacky, powerlifting-type suits all depend on the promoter. In general, straps are unlikely to be allowed depending on the event as grip is such a tested variable).
4. How many competitors will there be? This helps you know around how much time you'll have between events.
5. Will there be food/drinks provided? (This is something that people often overlook - competition day eating - check for an article on that topic coming up.)

Ok, going by event, I'm now going to discuss different ways to prepare for each event by using the implement itself or with common weight room equipment.

Farmer's Walk - *Muscles used*-> *upper/low back, quads, grip, shoulders.*

Check with your local welder and see if they can build implements like those you'll be using during the event. You must train like you plan on competing. There is a difference in the cylinders/tubes carried during the event and dumbbells. However, if you don't have the \$\$ or time, use the next best thing. Find out the distance you'll have to travel so you can mimic that exact event at home.

By looking at this event being done, the common movement it looks like is the standing DB Shrug, so this is a great exercise to help performance at this event. Don't use straps unless you'll be using them in the competition. A variation I often use is lift the dumbbells and let them hang at arms length to your sides. Then shrug them as high as you can, trying to touch your ears. Hold this top position for as long as possible. Keep track of how long you can hold in this position then try to improve on that time each time. There's a piece of equipment called a "Trap Bar" which is shaped like a diamond and is used to do shrugs. This is another way of doing shrugs and preparing for the event. You can also do heavy deadlifts with this bar to mimic the feeling of lifting the two implements at the beginning of the event. Think of the event in 3 phases: lift the implements, walk with the implements, finish the distance as fast as possible.

So, working on your strength is taken care of with the exercises mentioned above. Walking with 400+lbs is no joy either. Remember, not only are you deadlifting 400+lbs, but you're moving as fast as possible with that weight on potentially uneven ground. The feeling is similar to walking lunges. The quads start to fatigue along with the forearms. So, while working on holding heavy weight, also walking in a start:stop fashion will allow the body to prepare for accelerating then decelerating with weight. When it comes to grip, there are a few little tricks that can be done to help that strong grip perform. The first is called the hook grip. Brad Gillingham (www.jackalsgym.com) made this popular by deadlifting over 700lbs with a matched grip (both hands overhand gripped). Grab the dumbbells/bar like you normally do in an overhand fashion. Then, hold the tip of the index finger with the thumb that is wrapping around the bar/pipe/DB. This hurts like a b#*ch, but will add time to your grip. Another way that Magnus Ver Magnusson dominated this event was a trick changing the way you roll the wrist. When you pick up the DB/implement, instead of just letting the wrist hang straight down and gripping all you can, flex/roll the wrist in like a goose-neck or like the way you see bodybuilders

hold their wrists when doing a front biceps pose. This will bring a new set of muscles in and can allow that grip to hold on just that much longer.

Yoke Walk - *Muscles used-> whole back, traps, legs, calves, trunk.*

Many of us don't have the room to have a several hundred pound giant, steel yoke laying around, so hitting the weights to improve this event is important. At the same time, this event isn't usually seen at smaller competitions. Again, breaking the event into phases: squat the yoke, walk with the yoke, finish the course quickly. To improve the performance in the initial lift, heavy squatting is a must. Doing squats with barbells, a safety squat bar and heavy as h*ll is the key. A variation of squats that can help is called "walk outs". Be lifting a weight that you can't perform a normal squat with off the rack, walking out into the rack, then just standing there with all that weight on your back will prepare you mentally and get you used to holding your legs, arms and trunk tight for an extended period of time. I've done this before with 700+lbs and it's extremely draining both mentally and physically. When it comes to moving the yoke, walking lunges may be the best thing to do. Doing them heavy, fast, and without going down too far will allow the legs to get the feeling of the movement. The yoke is supported on the upper back and lack of stability there can cause instability through the whole body, so doing lots of trap work is important.

Loading Event - *Muscles used->grip, biceps, torso, legs, calves-can you say total body?*

This event is a test of strength, speed and agility so practice is essential. The modern strength athlete is not only strong, but must have quick feet and be agile. So setting up this event in your back yard won't take that much. First, find out what kind of items will be loaded. Most common are round sphyrcal cement stones but you might also encounter odd shaped objects as well. You can replicate this event by using cement blocks, dumbbells, rocks, pieces of iron/steel, barrels, kegs, you get the picture. Loading them onto a platform is the next thing to think about. If the platform isn't that high, you can practice by using the back of someone's pickup truck. Use your imagination, the promoter probably is. By lifting, moving quickly, dropping, then sprinting back for the next thing you're working on agility, speed and strength. Again, being strong, lean and quick will allow you to dominate this event.

Log Press - *Muscles used-> shoulders, triceps, back, hamstrings*

This event can be broken down into different phases also. First, usually the log must be cleaned (lifted from the ground to the front of the shoulders) and then pressed (arms locked over the head). So, cleaning the log becomes an event in itself. The shorter competitor will enjoy this event more as their mechanics will tend to help them. Getting a log is the best way to prepare for this event. However, steel logs aren't the cheapest piece of equipment. I got one from Mastiff Strength Equipment. It is totally awesome and has helped me tremendously, but did set me back over \$400! Without a log, you can use both dumbbells and/or a barbell to work on your powerclean. The log's hand grips are usually 18-24inches apart and are set up in a neutral position so both palms are facing each other. Doing DB power and hang cleans will help you to practice shrugging, the triple extension (extension of the hips, knees and ankles), and shooting the elbows through to the top position. From this point, the shoulder press is next. Working this can be done in a variety of ways including seated and standing DB presses, barbell pressing both in front and behind the head, smith machine presses, narrow grip incline bench, push presses and jerks, Arnold presses, front DB raises, hammer curls, etc... Anything that nails the front deltoids, top of the chest, triceps and forearms. Now, a few tricks to get that much more weight off the ground are:

1. After lifting the log off the ground, squat down and rest the log on your thighs in a deep squatting stance. Then do a virtual front squat and the log will be a little higher.
2. If you lift the log to arms length (around the front of the hips), bend at the waist and then in one motion roll the log up your abs/torso and shoot the elbows through.

3. When locking it out, start by dipping the legs like the beginning of a front squat. Then jumping with the legs then dropping under the log and shooting the head under the log will allow for an easier lockout. I've seen competitors start the lockout and then stall \hat{A} ½ way to the top. They rest the log on the top of their heads, rest for a moment, then lock it out. Both times I've seen this done, it's counted. So give it a try, but don't blame me for your headache.