

**Here is Robert's first-person perspective:** My twenty-two hour flight didn't affect me. I was surprised. When I arrived I spent the day at the competition venue and photographed our light men and women before turning in and sleeping.

Twenty-two nations sent teams. Dominant teams included Japan, United States, and New Zealand. Japan's lifters were great sportsmen and sportswomen, performing remarkable lifts to loud cheers from Japanese spectators. Of course, New Zealand fans raised a racket for their home team. Our two U.S.A. coaches and our two athletes who acted as my handler when I lifted Saturday afternoon were great and I owe the four my thanks and gratitude.

The world meet lasted four days. I lifted on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, when the 275 men and heavyweight men rocked and rolled. I opened with an easy 363 lbs. (165 kgs.), smoked the bar, and retired to my chair backstage while ten lifters in my flight cycled through their opening attempts. No one remembers what you open with. The record books show what you finished with. I take a big jump between my opener and my second attempt. Too many lifters open with weights beyond their abilities on a given day, and they bomb out when they are unable to complete a lift during their three attempts. At our banquet Saturday evening, the president of the IPF lamented the high number of bomb outs by veteran lifters.

From my opener with 363, I called for 408 lbs. (185 kgs.) as my second attempt and moved that weight nicely. Indeed, after lifting was completed and I awaited the metal ceremony, the head judge sought me out backstage and complimented me on my weight selection and bar speed.

Our coaches went to work after my second attempt with 408 lbs. My role on the American team was to pile up team points, toward a team championship, by placing second or third. So our American coaches tracked my progress against the Finn – Lollo – when deciding on my third and final attempt.

Had I lifted individually, and not as a team member, I would have called for 441 lbs. (200 kgs.) on my third attempt. 441 lbs. would

be my lifetime best, a new Wisconsin record, and a weight which I felt I would blow away on the world platform last Saturday. Keep in mind that I will be unable to die and go to heaven unless I bench press 450 lbs. before my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Ah, but those American coaches and that darn Finn. The Finn moved ahead when he completed 441 lbs. Our coaches pined, “Hey, Robert, how about 2.5 kgs (5.5 lbs) more?”

Ya, sure, bring it on. Maybe I’ll hit 446 lbs. for my final lift. I feel good. My two handlers were our world-record holder from 181 and our gold medal winner from 165. They liked the way I looked.

When I waited for the ten heavyweights to cycle through their second attempts before I take the stage for my final and third attempt, our coaches got their calculator out, heard Lollo’s call for his third attempt, and decided that I had to complete 457 lbs. (207.5 kg) to beat the Finn.

Ya, o.k. What’s the difference between 441 and 457? Feathers.

So I took the platform for my third and final attempt with the bar loaded to 457 lbs.

The bar descended nicely after I took the bar and held it motionless, awaiting the heard referee’s start command. I lowered 457 lbs. with good control and placed the bar squarely on my chest, waiting for the head referee’s command to press. Powerlifting, if you haven’t noticed, includes lots of waiting. After the bar was motionless on my chest, the head referee yelled “press” and I was free to press 457 lbs. As I pressed upward, my right foot slipped two inches (disqualifying my attempt because a lifter may not move their feet after starting downward). No matter, moving foot or not, I didn’t have strength to press 457 lbs. but a few inches. Thanks goodness for vigilant spotters.

I’m honored to represent the United States on our national team. I’m thrilled to win a bronze medal in international competition. Who knew a big guy could cry during a medal ceremony when our national anthem was played?

Next up for me is the United States Masters National Powerlifting Championships in St. Louis on May 3<sup>rd</sup> where we'll squat, bench press, and deadlift. I only have 12 days to recover from New Zealand and get my legs back. At the national championships in 2008 in Miami, I set four Wisconsin records. I'd like to break those records in St. Louis next week. As I did last year, I will lift against the great Steve Green from California. Green is strong like a bull, and unless something unexpected happens, I'll likely finish second to Green again. I'm waiting to win a national powerlifting title (which includes the three lifts). Since 1992 I've lifted in 9 national championships. St. Louis will be my tenth powerlifting nationals. Several times I've finished second and third, but I've yet to win the three-lift nationals. Stay tuned.



Robert Crawford pressing 408 lbs. under the watchful eye of Australian Judge Anne Mort, Head Judge Joe Marksteiner, and New Zealand side judge Jim Clifford.



Metal ceremony at IPF World Bench Press Championships. (l to r) Australian Judge Robert Wilks, Robert Crawford (3<sup>rd</sup>), Jim Ray (1<sup>st</sup> World Record Holder), and Finish Lifter Tuomo Lollo.



Metal winners from 275 and heavyweight classes.



Deborah Ferrell attempts new world record with 420 lbs