

# SPOTLIGHT ON SUZANNE "SIOUX-Z" HARTWIG-GARY (USA)



**I**PF Magazine caught up with inspirational lifter "Sioux-Z" Hartwig-Gary of the USA, who gave us a fascinating insight into her world of Powerlifting.

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### **When did you start getting involved in the sport?**

I discovered powerlifting in 1991. I trained for six weeks, competed, did another competition two weeks later, and then one more a week after that. In May 1992, I moved to Virginia to pursue my powerlifting career.

### **Who is your inspiration?**

God has blessed me with the physical gifts and health to lift heavy weights. I draw most of my inspiration from Him. Early in my powerlifting career, Kirk Karwoski and Carrie Boudreau inspired me. They were consistent, technically sound, and very strong. Today, I'm most inspired by Dave Ricks and my husband Matt Gary. Dave is a master's lifter who keeps getting stronger and competing at the highest levels of our sport. Matt serves as my coach and biggest cheerleader. His knowledge of the sport and training techniques rivals anyone I've met. I'm inspired by his "never quit" attitude as he's recently battled through some injuries and

forged his way back to hit some all-time personal records.

### **How does it feel for you as a Master lifter to come to the Open Worlds and compete with the best there, and still break World records?**

I am very honored to be able to compete at the Open Worlds as a Master lifter. As long as God keeps blessing me with health and strength, my dream and goal is to be able to be competitive in the Open Worlds for many years to come. I also want to be successful in the inaugural Raw World Cup this coming June in Sweden. Just because we get older, doesn't mean we can't get stronger!

### **What's next for you?**

I have a busy year ahead of me. I am currently training for the USAPL Women's Nationals (equipped) in May. After that I have a quick turn-around for the IPF Classics Powerlifting World Cup (raw) this June in Sweden. That's followed by the USAPL Raw Nationals in August and if all goes well, the IPF Master's Worlds in early October and IPF Open Worlds in early November. After that, I think I'll need some rest.

### **Can you tell us about your preparation for the Open Worlds and how you saw yourself competing before?**

My preparation for Open Worlds included four days of training per week. I train every lift twice per week: once heavy (equipped) and once lighter (raw) with some time devoted to assistance exercises to address my weaknesses.

I always try to be positive. Some days things do not go as planned. I may do fewer reps or sets if things feel wrong, but I believe something positive can be taken away each day.

When competing I have a few different things that I do to get myself ready. During warm-ups Matt and I always pray for the safety of everyone at the competition and that God will help me perform at my best. Typically when I am on deck or in-the-hole I will visualize myself doing the lift successfully. Lastly, when I am about to start the lift I always say, "You and me God, let's

go!" My faith in the Lord gives me confidence and hope for greater things. Late in 2003 I had a bulging disc in my neck and was told I should consider surgery and give up powerlifting. I will admit, the first thing I asked God was, "Why?" The next thing I did was pray to Him that He would get me through rehab, teach me whatever lesson I could learn, and give me the courage to persevere and become stronger than I'd ever been before. Praise the Lord, He answered my prayers and almost ten years later, I am competing, enjoying myself, and stronger than ever.



*'I consider it an honor and privilege to compete in the IPF. I have been able to travel the world and make friends of many nationalities.'*

### **When you are not doing powerlifting, what do you do for fun?**

When I'm not powerlifting, I work as a massage therapist and a bookkeeper. I enjoy church activities, dancing, movies,

photography, travel, and spending time with loved ones.

### **What is your secret in training?**

I have no real secrets other than listening to my body and always giving 100%. It doesn't matter how much weight is on the bar, I try to make every rep perfect. Technique is king!

### **When will be the next big competition for you?**

The next really big competition is the inaugural IPF Classics Powerlifting World Cup in Sweden. I am really looking forward to it being a huge success for the IPF.

### **Where do you see powerlifting in the next 10-20 years?**

I hope I am still competing 10-20 years from now. I believe raw lifting will be much more popular and that it will continue to bring new people into the sport. Hopefully, with more exposure, powerlifting will have a better chance of getting into the Olympics.

### **What is your most memorable moment in powerlifting for you?**

Wow, that is a hard one. Most people would think it was when I won the Open World Championships or the first time I set a Master's World Record. I can't really pick one but will add another - the first time I placed at an IPF Open Worlds, when I took the bronze medal in Germany 2002.

**What was the toughest competition you ever competed in?**

My toughest was 2005 USAPL Women's Nationals in St. Louis, Missouri. It was my first competition back after missing an entire year due to a bulging disc in my neck. My training was going great and just before the competition I tweaked my hamstring. Everything turned out OK but I was very nervous that I would not be able to compete or would irritate the disc in my neck.

**Do you have a message for powerlifters out there?**

Powerlifting is great for the mind, body and soul. Train hard, train smart but have fun! No matter how successful you are there is always something that you can learn from another lifter. Pay it forward

and give back to the sport. That is how it will continue to grow and be strong.

**Tell us (the powerlifting world) something about you that we don't know yet!**

When I was 14, I weighed 98-pounds (44kg) and was shown how to squat and bench press on a Monday. On Wednesday we practiced and on Friday we maxed out. I squatted 200-pounds (91kg) and benched 100-pounds (45kg). I wanted to start lifting weights but was told there wasn't room for girls to train. It wasn't until eight years later when someone saw me lift on a universal machine and said, "You're strong! You should be a powerlifter." I asked what that was, and the journey began.

May I take this opportunity to also say this: I consider it an honor and privilege to compete

in the IPF. I have been able to travel the world and make friends of many nationalities. I could not have had this much success on my own. I want to thank Pete Alaniz of Titan Support Systems for his generosity as my gear sponsor and friend over the years. Thanks to my friends and family for their emotional support. My parents have traveled to many competitions, even a few World Championships. Thank you to Matthew Gary - my husband, best friend, and coach. Last but not least, I thank the Lord for the gifts of peace, love, strength, and perseverance. I wish blessings and health to everyone in 2012 and beyond.

**Thank you Suzanne, we appreciate your time and allowing us a bit more of a glimpse into your world! We send you and Matt our best wishes for a strong and happy 2012!**



Suzanne & Matt