

HENRY THOMASON

BY MARK BELL

Henry Thomason is one of the best squatters in the world, and when it's all said and done he will go down as an all-time great. His strength is so out-of-this-world that he can jump into any contest and perform well, even drug-tested contests. How many multi-ply guys would be able to do that?

Thomason has the biggest single-ply squat of 1,058 lbs. and he is working on breaking the all time multi-ply squat record. He recently shot up with 1,275 in an effort to best Jonas Rantanen's world record, but came up a little short on depth. Thomason did end the day with a PR and a 1,207-lb. squat. I'm not sure if people understand how hard it can be jumping back and forth between single and multi-ply, but Thomason makes it look easy.

MB: What is the deal with your crazy squat? How do you train, really heavy and really often?

HT: Constantly working on form and technique. I videotape my lifts and troubleshoot for errors. The trick is to keep your upper torso upright throughout the entire lift. I train the squat once a week, mostly in single-ply gear or old double briefs. A normal training day would be squatting five sets x three reps, then build up to 3x1 up to a PR, but still working on speed and form and getting 2 minutes rest between sets. Every week I change it up: bars, boxes, walking out, bands, chains.

Example: Use a mono-lift and a Buffalo bar with a low box, wearing single suit (straps down) with 750 lbs., 5x3. Then build up to 3x1 at 800-950 lbs. with suit straps up and/or knee wraps. Six weeks out from the meet, work on walk-outs or mono-lift. Change the training sets 3x2, then add full gear with 2x1. Lastly, take three weeks of de-loading from heavy squatting.

MB: Can you clear up what you said at the end there? What does full gear, two sets of one mean? Also, what kind of weights are you using?

HT: Six weeks out from a meet, I start working on walk-outs and/or using a mono-lift. I still do three sets of two reps (training sets 55 to 75 percent) and two sets of one rep, building up to a second attempt on meet day.

Here's an example of a training cycle for a single-ply walk out squat Texas power bar with straight weight:

Week 1 - Warm up with suit straps down at 700x2 to 750x2; then with knee wraps and straps down at 800x2; then with full gear 850x1 to 900x1.

Week 2 - Warm up with suit straps down at 725x2 to 775x2; then with knee wraps and straps down at 825x2; then full gear 900x1 to 950x1.

Week 3 - Warm up with suit straps down at 800x2 to 850x2; then with knee wraps and straps down at 900x2; then full gear 950x1, 1,000x1.

Week 4 - De-load.

Week 5 - De-load.

Week 6 - Meet first 950, 1,020 and 1,060.

MB: Oddly enough, a lot of what you wrote is how my hero, Super D, AKA Donnie Thompson, trains. When you perform your 5x3 reps, is there a percentage associated with it or do you just go by feel?

HT: Going into the training session the game plan is to try and follow 55 to 75 percent of my last completion max, but keep the same weight for five sets of three reps. The main thing is to look at bar speed and form. If the bar moves slow, subtract weight. If I am using a specialty bar (Cambered, Safety Squat bar bands/chains), I go off of what the warm-ups feel like that day.





MB: You squatted 1,058 lbs. in single-ply and 1,207 lbs. in multi-ply. No one is even close to that combo. What's your best raw? Any plans to hit over 900 lbs. in a raw meet?

HT: At this time my raw max without knee wraps is 860 lbs., which I did in training a couple weeks ago while getting ready for a single-ply meet. Yes, I will be lifting raw at the Raw Unity Meet 5 in Corpus Christi, Texas, in January. I have no chance of winning but should be able to make a run at a 903-lb. squat.

MB: You've written on Facebook, "Tomorrow I'm going full gear so bring in your lawn chairs and get ready for a long day." I know you are joking around, but it's my belief that things like that are what separate out the good from the great. Donnie Thompson once told me he sometimes has a workout that lasts longer than four hours. Why? He says it's because no one else is doing it, and meets take a long time, so why not be prepared for that? What's your mindset like as you embark on going where no man has gone before?

HT: My mindset is to do the best I can and have fun with it. (And make sure we get it on video!) We really do bring our lawn chairs to the gym so the guys can have their families and friends watch the show. But I do understand where Donnie is coming from regarding the four-hour training sessions. There are several factors that come into play. A good example is on a Sunday morning squat training session when I am preparing for a double-ply contest. It takes me about three hours of training and two hours of drive time. It mostly takes a long time to get the right people in gym to help with coaching, spotting and putting gear on. You have to get everyone committed in the gym so you can hit the work and accomplish your goals out on the platform.

Here's a rundown of my Sunday mornings at BAG (Bad Attitude Gym):

- 8 a.m. - Drive 1 hour to the Bad Attitude Gym.
- 9 a.m. - Stretch for 30 minutes and set up any equipment we will be using.
- 9:30 a.m. - Raw squat warm-ups for 30 minutes.
- 10 a.m. - Raw squat training sets for 30 minutes.
- 10:30 a.m. - Put on briefs for 15 minutes.
- 10:45 a.m. - Briefs-only squat training sets for 30 minutes.
- 11:15 a.m. - Add suit for 15 minutes. I need an extra person to help put gear on.
- 11:30 a.m. - Main squat training sets for 30 to 45 minutes with rest. I need someone to wrap my knees and put on my suit, and also to give up calls and/or squat commands.
- 12:15 p.m. - Change over to a deadlift suit for 15 minutes. I



need an extra person to help me take off the squat suit and briefs.

12:30 p.m. - Deadlift movement for 30 minutes.

1:00 p.m. - Drive back on home for 1 hour.

*Single-ply training and non-gear training days are about 1 to 1.5 hours because of less weight being used and time spent in gear.

MB: What are some of your favorite assistance movements for lower body?

HT: I do so many sets of raw and training sets that I really don't do any assistance movements for lower body. If anything, I do raw speed deadlifts or rack pulls in a conventional stance against bands or chains, six to 10 singles with about 50 percent of my contest max with short rest periods.

MB: I admire your improvements in the bench and deadlift. After all, it's a powerlifting meet, not a squat exhibition. What have you done to bring up the bench and deadlift?

HT: In the bench, I've been working on technique and form, trying to get the bench stroke short as possible, training in the bench shirt every week and doing heavy board presses and increase shoulder exercises. For the deadlift, using a higher box during my squat training has been a big help. Also always doing some type of deadlift exercise each week and increasing upper back and grip work on non-lower body days.

MB: How does a "non skinny" guy like yourself deal with the humidity in Texas?

HT: This past year Bad Attitude Gym has move to a climate-controlled facility, which has been a big help. Also, working in a manufactory plant for 60 hours a week helps me get used to the heat/humidity pretty quickly.

MB: I know a few guys that would be perfect for a place with that name. Tell me more about Bad Attitude Gym. What's it like? Who owns it? Who else trains there? Do you guys take anyone or is it selective?

HT: Bad Attitude Gym is a hardcore powerlifting club located north of Dallas in Carrollton, Texas. BAG started out in the garage of Sean Donegan. When it outgrew its original home, it relocated to a warehouse space that allowed more equipment. Then, a few years ago, we moved into a larger climate-controlled facility. We have competed in, and support, every organization. It's our feeling that, as a beginner, you should try them all and find your niche. We support all lifters: pro, amateur, raw, single- and double-ply. Some of the lifters who train at BAG are Sean Donegan, Phillip Wylie, Scott



Prosek, Shae Jones, Adam Nunnalle, Adam Korenke, Mark Swank, Amanda DuVall, Jim DuVall, John Caruso and Alan Borden.

MB: What are your best single- and multi-ply totals?

HT: Single-ply 308: 2,303 lbs. (NASA) SHW: 2,403 lbs. (USPA). Double-ply 308: 2,500 lbs. (SPF) SHW: 2,650 lbs. (SPF).

MB: Hey dude, I can't out-total the people I interview, so please start working out. Maybe you should start using band training so you're not so weak.

HT: Funny, Mark. Real funny. I have been band training! The funny thing about band training for me in the squat is it takes a ton of weight to hit depth. A good example is squatting in a suit and briefs doing a heavy circa-max about two weeks out from a meet. It takes about 1,100 lbs. or so for me to break parallel. So having 600 lbs. in bands and 600 lbs. in bar weight, I only get about 25 percent way down. That's why I have to use so much bar weight in my training. But I do several resisted exercises on



light/speed days, which helps a ton with lockouts on bench and overall raw strength.

MB: Who are your favorite lifters?

HT: Randall Harris, Mike Womack, Adam Hires, Alan Best, Tony Cardella, Scott Cartwright, Matt Wenning and Brian Carroll.

MB: Brian Carroll? Really? Who the heck is that?

HT: He's a powerlifter, Mark!

MB: What does it feel like to have nearly 1,300 lbs. on your back? What runs through your head with a big ole weight like that?

HT: Well, Mark, just load up 1,300 on the bar and un-rack it a couple times. You'll find out real fast what it feels like! No, really, it feels like 500 lbs. on your back and it's the easiest lift of the day. A couple thoughts going through my head during a crazy squat would be "Down, down, down, knees out. UP! Head back, rack it, then smile real big for the camera. **PM**

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