

# JENNIFER THOMPSON'S MATH: 2+2=300 LBS. RAW

BY SHERYL "PUNKY" CONDON

**J**ennifer Thompson is a 38-year-old, 132-lb. math teacher and mother of two boys from Denver, N.C. She looks like the girl next door and you would never know, if you saw her, that she benches 300 lbs. raw. Not only is she the No. 1 ranked American lifter of all time in the 132-lb. raw bench press on powerlifting-watch.com, but she outlifts No. 2 by 70 lbs. She can squat and deadlift also holding the No. 2 position on the same list in the squat at 315 lbs. and No. 1 in the deadlift at 429 lbs. Her 300-lb. raw bench at this year's Arnold Raw Challenge was a new world record.

**Aside from bench-pressing math students all day, how often do you train and what is your training like?** We used to train like crazy six days a week. Then, about 10 years ago, we figured out that we got stronger the more rest we had. Currently, we train two days in a row and then take two off on an eight-day cycle. We train for about an hour and a half to two hours, depending on how many people showed up to the gym that day. It is an intense hour and a half. There isn't a day that goes by that I am not muscle sore somewhere.

**Can you describe your eight-day cycle? Types of movements, sets, reps?** We have a heavy cycle and a speed cycle. On our speed cycle we start with three competition lifts, working our way up to our max. Then we have three sets that have reps of three, five and seven using rubber bands. The five reps are 95 percent of the three rep weight and the seven reps are 85 percent of our three rep weight. We do this for squat and deadlifts. Squat day is the three max singles, three, five or seven reps with bands, box squats (three sets of five). Our bench day is three max singles, band presses, incline, decline and then what we call "t-shirt presses." We take a light

weight, do an exaggerated pause on our chest and then fire it up as fast as we can. We have a triceps day that is comprised of lock-outs, decline close grip bench, push-downs, shoulder presses with a neutral bar. On deadlift day we use the three, five, seven reps off a 2-inch box, rack pulls (two sets of five), good mornings, pull-downs, pull-ins, bicep curls with the bar and dumbbells (all two sets with reps of eight).

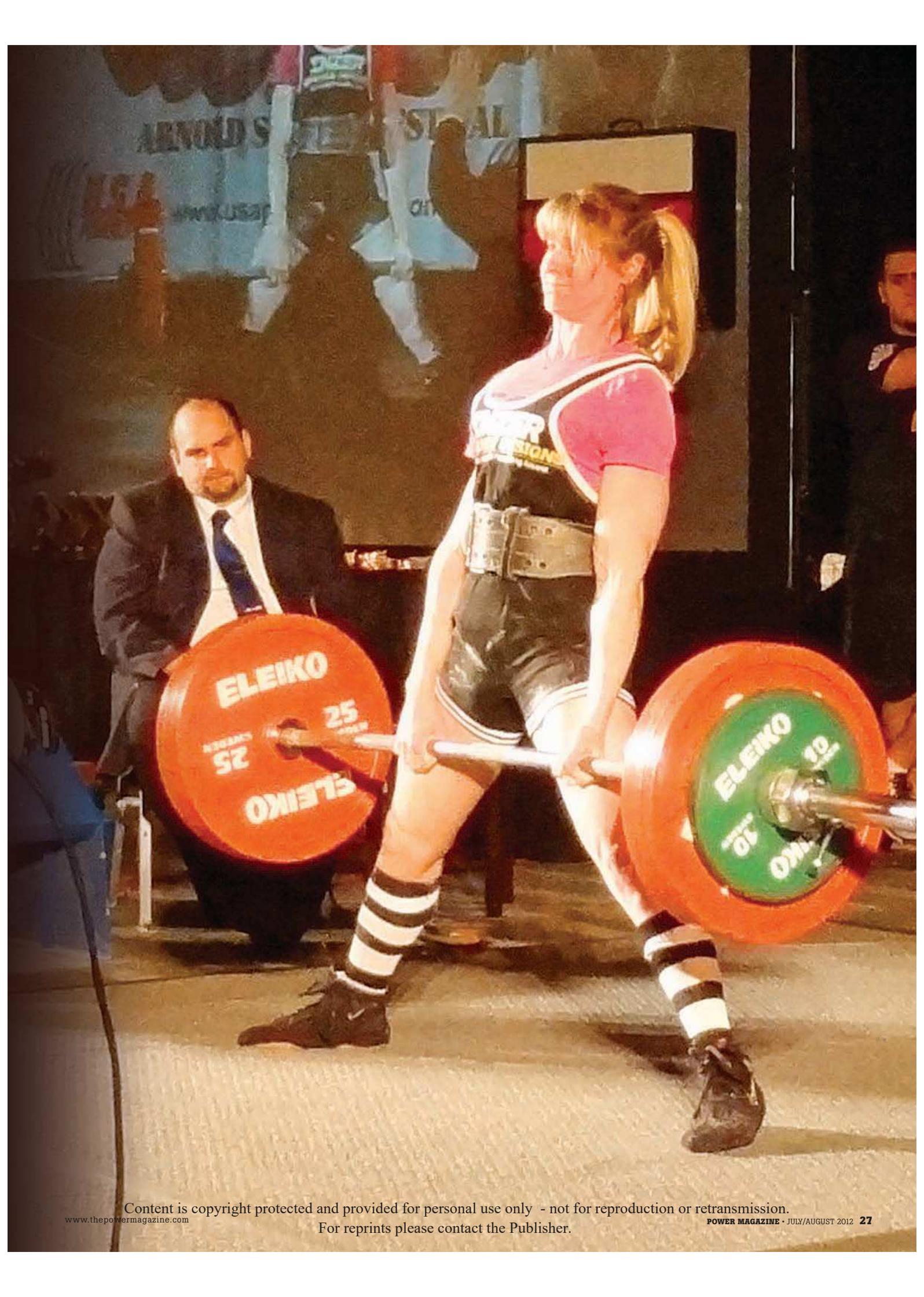
Then we switch to a heavy cycle. Our bench and squat workouts start with a heavy hold. You take a heavy weight out of the rack, settle it and hold it for 15 seconds. The most I have done on the bench press is 510 lbs. and the most on the squat is 520 lbs. On bench day, we do three sets of five reps on the flat bench, two sets of five on incline and decline and reverse band presses, where we hang the weight from the top of a squat rack and load up the bar (two sets of five) then finish off with dumbbell presses. On squat day, we keep the three, five, seven reps and then hit the ham glute and reverse hyper machine. Triceps day doesn't change much, except we do regular close grip presses and preacher curls. Deadlift day is reps with three, five, seven rack pulls from a higher rack, Romanian deadlifts, t-bar pulls and pull-ups along with shoulders.

**Are you on a special diet?**

**What do you eat in a typical day?** I try to eat well. I diet depending on if I am lifting in the 132s (national weight class) or 138s (international weight class). I get 200g of protein in a day (about one and a half times body weight). If I am trying to lose weight, I will keep my carbs around 150g. If not, I let them get up to 300g.

I start my day off with a Quest Nutrition Ana-pro protein shake with milk (50g protein), some Jacked Stacked 2 for my creatine and then some of my beloved coffee. I hit a Promax bar at 11 a.m. (20g





rotein) and a high protein lunch at 1 p.m. I usually eat eggs at lunch. Then a Greek yogurt (I love Cobani) when I get up from my afternoon nap (I love a 30-minute nap!) I have the System's pre-drink from SSP 20 minutes before I work out. I drink the Post and Maintain afterward (more protein); my dinner usually consists of chicken or pork. Then I drink one more Ana Pro before I go to bed with water. I do splurge on pizza and other bad things periodically.

**You look fairly lean in competition. Do you usually cut weight for meets or stay the same weight all year?** I only have to cut some weight for the 132s. I usually walk around at 138-ish. You wouldn't think 6 lbs. would be tough to lose, but I am pretty lean all ready, so it takes about six weeks to lose it.



**your openers and jumps for a meet?** Raw lifting has a different method than equipped lifting. With the equipment you can always tweak something and hit several heavy lifts one after another. With the raw lifting, you really have to plan out your lifts so that you will have enough strength to hit your big number on the third attempt.

I always start with a super easy opener. I really use

it as my last warm-up. I think in my deadlift I opened with 371 and then jumped to 420. I choose my second lift as a max that I have no reservations about achieving. It is usually something I hit in the gym before the competition. The third lift is something I think I can achieve if I give it everything I have and all the stars fall into place.

At the Arnold everything fell into place nicely. I made weight after eating a light dinner. I hydrated quickly with an SSP Post drink,

**“POWERLIFTING IS A GREAT SPORT FOR WOMEN. I KNOW THE USAPL HAS A GOOD SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR WOMEN. WE HAVE A WOMEN’S NATIONALS, WOMEN’S COMMITTEE AND WOMEN’S HALL OF FAME.”**

**Your bench is literally off the charts. Do you do any special training for the bench?** I really try to keep my back loose enough to arch. I am not very flexible, so every day I stretch my back over a football two or three times. I start with the football somewhat flat and then pump it up over time. This allows me to get up on the top of my shoulder blades when I bench. I also work on my leg drive – that is really what most lifters are missing, and it makes a huge difference. I focus on driving my heels into the floor and push with my legs as if I am trying to push my head off of the top of the bench. Other than that, it's hard work.

**You also compete equipped, what are your bests lifts in equipment and how do you incorporate gear into your training?** My best-equipped lifts are a 403-lb. squat, 331-lb. bench and a 409-lb. deadlift. It has been about a year since women's nationals and I haven't gotten back into the equipment yet. Mostly when training for an equipped meet, I do my max lifts with the equipment on and I will incorporate board presses in for the bench. Other than that, my training really doesn't change much.

**I noticed at the Arnold Raw Challenge this year all your lifts were strong and fast, including your record lift. How do you plan**

Emergent-C drink and ate oatmeal and a banana. I had an SSP Pre drink right before my lift, which has a good amount of caffeine in it. Then I ate again after the squats with a protein bar, cookies, more drinks. It is important to eat (snack) throughout a meet without getting too bloated. I think a great training cycle, dieting for six weeks to gradually lose a few pounds and really nourishing myself the day of the meet made it super successful.

**I understand your husband is your coach. How has he contributed to your success? Does being married to your coach create any challenges?** Donovan is an excellent coach. He is constantly looking at our workouts, re-evaluating and adjusting. He is very good with body mechanics and is able to identify which exercises are going to work the best for us. He can look at anyone's form and make small adjustments that will improve the lift. Plus, if you ask anyone on the USAPL World Bench Press Team (he was the head coach for five years), no one can run numbers like he can. He is like Rain Man when it comes to jockeying for positions.

In the beginning of this adventure, we had to have a "meeting of the minds." He had coached high school wrestling for 10 years and was a collegiate wrestler himself. So he had a coaching technique

down that we needed to adjust. I perform much better with a positive environment with a lot of encouragement. Yelling really doesn't motivate me; it just makes me angry and want to quit. Also, in the beginning, I was the only one competing.

Donovan decided to compete in a meet with me to get some experience and I think that really helped him get a good perspective on the pressures of the sport. Plus, he caught the powerlifting bug and has been competing ever since. Most people probably don't know this, but he has won master's nationals, been on the world master's team and holds the American record in the bench. That seems to fall behind my shadow, but he doesn't seem to mind, he is my biggest supporter.

I most definitely would not be where I am today without Donovan Thompson. Not only is he an awesome coach, but husband and father. I couldn't ask for anything more.

**Do you think powerlifting is a good sport for women? Why?**

Powerlifting is a great sport for women. I know the USAPL has a good support system for women. We have a women's nationals, women's committee and women's hall of fame. I feel like our side of the sport is celebrated and given notice though social media.

**Do you have any tips for success for women powerlifters?**



Women will be successful in powerlifting if they don't let the stigma of the gym being for men hinder their participation or worrying if they will look like a guy. Also, never limit yourself. Set goals for this workout, this month, this year. You will be amazed at what you can achieve. I can remember thinking if I ever got to bench 135 lbs. it would be amazing. I participated in an e-book called Powerlifting For Women. It is a great book for those starting out in the sport and those who have been in it for awhile. It has great workouts, shows good form and has interviews with great female powerlifters such as

Sioux-z Harwig Gary. There are great tips on how we all prepare for meets, plus videos on the lifts as well. Visit this site for more information: <http://powerliftingforwomen.com/success.html?hop=gablej>

**Whats next for you?** IPF Raw World Cup, June 13 in Stockholm, Sweden. I am very excited to participate in the first raw world championships. Then the USAPL Raw National Powerlifting Championships, August 3rd in Kileen, TX. After that I am not sure.

Thank you my sponsors: Inzer Advance Designs (the best powerlifting gear), SSP Nutrition, Quest Nutrition and my husband, Donovan — he is the mastermind behind this operation and my biggest supporter. **PM**

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