

# BRITISH STRENGTH

M A G A Z I N E

ARE YOU AN  
ATHLETE  
OR A CASUAL  
TRAINER?

RICHARD  
FOSTER ON  
MESO-  
DOSING

AN  
INTERVIEW  
WITH  
JULIA MILLS

**AN  
INTERVIEW  
WITH**

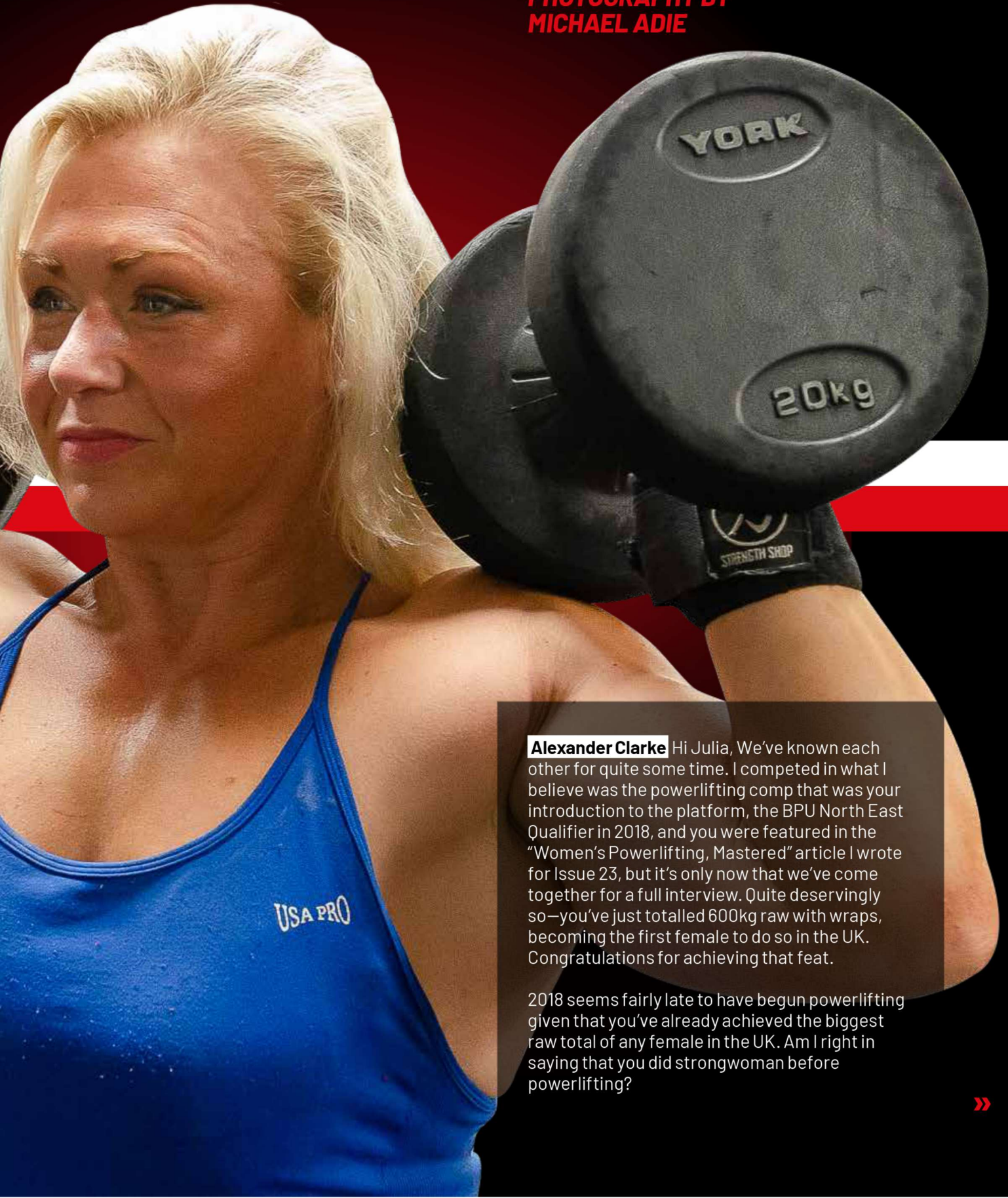


**JULIA  
MILLS**

USA PRO



**INTERVIEWED BY  
ALEXANDER CLARKE**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
MICHAEL ADIE**



**Alexander Clarke** Hi Julia, We've known each other for quite some time. I competed in what I believe was the powerlifting comp that was your introduction to the platform, the BPU North East Qualifier in 2018, and you were featured in the "Women's Powerlifting, Mastered" article I wrote for Issue 23, but it's only now that we've come together for a full interview. Quite deservedly so—you've just totalled 600kg raw with wraps, becoming the first female to do so in the UK. Congratulations for achieving that feat.

2018 seems fairly late to have begun powerlifting given that you've already achieved the biggest raw total of any female in the UK. Am I right in saying that you did strongwoman before powerlifting?



**Julia Mills** Hey Alex, it's great to chat! Yes, we both competed that day, it was my first introduction to powerlifting, and I believe I totalled 445kg that day, it was a fantastic experience and really gave me a bug for competing! I do believe you pulled a rather marvellous deadlift that day too! Brilliant to see and very inspiring.

Thank you for the congratulations, it's just started to sink in! I was quite a late starter in powerlifting, having come from a strongman background. Strongman is a fantastic sport, but I was intrigued by powerlifting, plus, I have always loved to bench rather than overhead press! So I decided to give it a go! :)

**AC** Yeah, it was a really good day for me too. I pulled 382.5kg that day.

After that competition, what made you think that you might want to carry on pursuing powerlifting?

**JM** Yes, it was an amazing lift! The full day was such a fantastic environment, I absolutely loved the support for each lifter as they got on the platform! I was excited to get my invite for the British Championships and compete in a bigger tournament. Plus, I really wanted to pull 200kg in comp.

**AC** Just for reference, at that qualifier, what were your three lifts, and how does your total break down now?

**JM** So, my first comp, I think I did, squat: 150kg, bench: 105kg, deadlift: 190kg. And recently, squat: 235kg, bench: 135kg, deadlift: 230kg.

**AC** They're some absolutely huge improvements! Especially on the squat! Do you still compete in strongwoman ever?

**JM** Thank you! Squat was by far my weakest lift, I've got fairly long femurs for my size, so it was a matter of working on stance and bar position to get the most biomechanically out of the lift; in lockdown one, we acquired a rather wobbly barbell holder, and I started a Bulgarian-style program—tough going but yielded some great results!

Yes, I still compete in strongman, I've just been lucky enough to get a invite to UK's Strongest Woman in two weeks! Which is an incredible line up of inspirational women and should be on the TV later in the year!



**AC** Oh, how did you find the Bulgarian-style programme on your joints? It's awesome that UK's will be televised. Another step in the right direction for strength sports!

**JM** It was fairly hard going. I used knee wraps most days due to old knee injuries, which helped a lot, and I just listened to my body; some days, I only worked up to 120kg but focussed on perfecting the movement.

It's absolutely fantastic, isn't it? It's brilliant to see strength sports becoming more popular with a bigger following, hopefully leading to more people wanting to take part!

**AC** How about before you did any strength training, did you have a sporting background before then?

**JM** I grew up in a very active environment. I started judo and gymnastics when I was tiny and had horses growing up, so I was used to competing from an early age.

**AC** I bet that gave you an awesome base for powerlifting—some really good general physical preparation. Some form of martial art and gymnastics are the sports I'm looking to get my little boy, Logan, into soon. Did you compete in those sports?

**JM** I honestly can't recommend a martial art and gymnastics enough for your little boy! The discipline of the martial arts is an excellent mentality to build from a young age.

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Yes, I did compete. I think I did basic gymnastics comps and got all my BAGA awards and competed to British championships level in judo, attaining a brown belt, two black bars as a teen.

Both sports are incredibly good fun and build loads of skills.

**AC** Oh wow, so you're not far off a judo black belt and can also total 600kg. The readers will be making a mental note not to mess with you! ;)

What do you attribute, training wise, to you becoming the only woman in the UK to have totalled 600? Do you feel like you've done anything different to what others might have which has helped you to achieve this? How does your training split break down, and how do you periodise it throughout the year?

**JM** I'm actually a big softie really, lol.

I feel really privileged to do this! There are a lot of very strong women in the sport who will, I'm sure, be joining me soon. I've worked very consistently over the last two years, I don't do a lot of comps, and I take a long off season. This is where we do the groundwork, with a strong focus on any rehab and hypertrophy work; we use variations to stop any overuse niggles from happening.

When I start comp prep, everything becomes very focussed, nutrition is on point, variations are removed, and we focus on the three lifts in order to perfect technique as much as possible. My training split is usually four to five days per week, sessions lasting around three hours. Training methods are a cross between Bulgarian and conjugate. I always do a ton of accessory work which is only removed during the last few weeks so that I'm fresh when I hit the platform.

**AC** Very interesting! So, your training seems fairly standard in terms of the overall plan, but I guess the differences which set you apart are in the details—the same as any great athlete, really!

How about nutrition? Do you do anything special in this aspect?

**JM** Yes, it's very detail focussed! And thank you!

Yes, I program my own nutrition, and it really depends what part of the training cycle I'm in as to what I follow. It's generally high carb, high protein to maximise recovery, good fats in the form of oily fish, etc. Usually around 2800 kcals per day, significantly more if I'm in a hypertrophy block. I do cardio twice daily too, walking with my three lush hounds!

**AC** Oh, what dogs do you have??? I'm with you on the high carbs! I'd be remiss if I didn't ask about your partner, Sam Parker, and his involvement in you achieving your big total. How did you and Sam meet, and how does he help you in your day-to-day efforts to be the best lifter you can be?

**JM** I've got two mad border collies and a Samoyed who are absolutely my little loves.



And yes, high carbs are the way forward for strength athletes, I'm grumpy without them!

Sam has been amazing support, we initially met when I was training strongman and just starting out powerlifting, and he was my coach first which is a bit cliched, lol! We have a great relationship, lots of training, food and laughs. He is a fantastic sounding board, having been in the sport for such a long time and has literally always been my number one fan. We plan training sessions together, and he is always there in the gym with me; it works both ways, if he is prepping for a strength feat such as the Inch dumbbells, I do the same. In our first comp together as a team, I hit my first 500kg total, and we've just systematically progressed things from there!

**AC** Well, he is the first guy to have hit 1000kg raw in the UK, so if you're looking to break down barriers, he's a great influence to have around!

Forgive me for drawing attention to the fact, but you're a masters lifter, however, you choose to compete in the open class. What's the reason for this, and do you feel like you'd ever switch to competing as a master at any point down the line?

**JM** Absolutely! He is really is! And a great motivator. When he suggested that it may be possible for me to hit 600kg in comp, I was shocked, but then we put a plan in place to make it happen.

Haha, yes, I am a masters age lifter, but I really don't feel like one! I like to compete in the open category because I feel my lifts justify it, there are some fantastic masters lifters out there, and the masters group spans a massive age range too. I like to really push myself in comps, and my most recent goal was to get the the UK number one spot, so it gives me more motivation to compete as an open lifter... Maybe when I'm an M3, I'll compete as a master!



**AC** I suppose it just goes to show that the best powerlifting totals really can be achieved by masters lifters! What do you do for a day job?

**JM** It really does! I still think age is just a number; if you look at Andrey Malanichev, he held the world record of 1142.5kg for years and consistently hits over 1000kg in comps, which is outstanding!

I love both of my day jobs. I do online coaching and nutrition plans for strength athletes alongside some personal training. I also run a dog grooming business during the mornings.

**AC** 600kg is huge, but I imagine you have plans to improve on this performance in the near future. What are your goals for the next few years in terms of lifting? And how about life/career/business goals?

**JM** So, after this strongman comp, I'm gonna have a nice long off season, then think about next year's comps! I would love to hit 650kg in a perfect storm of a comp next year, which may sound a little outrageous now, but we both think it's potentially doable! I would also like a double bodyweight bench at some point in the future. We are both enjoying growing our businesses and spending time training ourselves, and supporting our athletes—really just enjoying life!

**AC** Thank you, Julia. You've proven in the past that you're able to make things happen, so I've no doubt you're capable of achieving those goals too. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview, it's been awesome.

**JM** Thank you so much for your time today, it's been a great chat! Catch up soon, no doubt! ■

