Strong to Live

No one failed to get out of a chair because of lack of cardiovascular fitness.....

As I think you may have gathered from my previous newsletter ramblings, I am a fan of strength. That's not to say I don't see the value in cardiovascular training or don't appreciate sports like distance running and cycling, I do – honest! It's just I like strength more. I see it as the most under developed fitness characteristic in the majority of exercisers, especially women and the elderly and one that, when lost, has the greatest impact on our ability to lead productive and independent lives. No one failed to get out of a chair because of lack of cardiovascular fitness. If you want to be active and independent into your golden years, you need strength! Anyway, I digress...sort of.

Cyprus, where I currently live, recently hosted the World masters Olympic weight lifting championships. This was a very under-advertised and poorly attended event but luckily, a good friend and fellow strength fan tipped me off. At the time of writing, the event is still underway and I managed to go and see the 45 and 50 year old female competition and it was gob smackingly good!

Older women from all around the world contested the snatch and clean and jerk lifting weights that approached and often exceeded their bodyweight. This would be impressive for a young male to achieve, let alone women in their 50s. The women looked fit, lean, not overly muscular and very athletic – characteristics not normally associated with people in late middle-age. While technical proficiency varied from flawless to messy, the commitment each athlete showed was staggering. Olympic weightlifting is one of those sports where you have to 'attack' the event aggressively or you just won't get anywhere. There is no such thing as an easy lift because if you don't go for it, you won't get the bar to where it needs to be for the lift to be considered legal.

In the couple of hours I was on site, I saw seven world records get broken and two British athletes win gold medals. I don't expect they'll get much media recognition for their amazing feats but I would like to offer my hearty congratulations to **Diane Tribblecock** and **Joanne Mcmanus** on their gold medals and **Beverly Patterson** and **Caroline Charles** on their Silver medals. Well done to you all and thanks for a great morning's entertainment. I'm sure more medals will follow later in the week and at the time of writing, Great Britain are doing very well in the team competition as well...**GO TEAM GB!**

I've also been scanning the results from the other categories and was astounded to see that the oldest age categories in the competition were 80 for men and 70 for women. No sign of slowing down for these athletes then and proof that regular exercise, a good diet and the right mindset are the key to longevity and health.

As well as being great entertainment, the competition inspired me to continue preaching the word of strength and while I don't suggest you go out and take up Olympic weightlifting (although you might be a World Champion in waiting!) I do encourage you to do at least as much strength training as you do cardio. Throw in some mobility and flexibility work and there is no reason that you too won't be fit, strong and healthy into your 80s, just like Marylin Munkres who, at the age of 70, set a new world record at the weekend lifting weights that would make the average Bodypump attendee blush!

For more information on the IWF World Championships visit
http://www.weightlifting.org.cy/events/2011/masters/index.htm

Wishing you a very healthy and active weekend.

Patrick Dale (ultra-FIT contributing editor)