



American Weightlifting

A Review by Neil Jones

For months, I've been anxiously awaiting the release of *American Weightlifting*, a documentary by Greg Everett. Greg is the mastermind behind Catalyst Athletics, and he is constantly working to promote weightlifting in the United States. Years ago, I started reading *The Performance Menu*, an online journal put out by Everett. Today, I follow their programming to improve my lifting. Their resources and videos took me from a CrossFitter who can kind of perform the clean and jerk to a passionate weightlifter.

Early this year, Everett released the trailer. Shut the front door. A movie about weightlifting? Give it to me now. Give it to me yesterday.

Well, yesterday, my wish was granted. A month before the premiere of the movie, I got a press screener of the movie.

What did I think, you ask? Well worth the wait. Everett takes us in a trip across the country and back in time. Burgener, Thrush, Takano, Schmitz, and others tell us where *American Weightlifting* came from and where they see it going. If you have been involved in weightlifting, you know that these are some of the GIANTS in *American Weightlifting*. Burgener casually mentions how he once clean and PRESSED 400 pounds!! What the what?!?! Takano gives us the origin of PHAT Elvis Weightlifting. Hilarious.

But some of that is only interesting if you are familiar with weightlifting. So, I tried to put myself in the shoes of an average American. What would I think about this documentary if I had never heard of weightlifting? The answer - I would search for the closest place in St. Louis to start lifting. Yes there are shots of huge guys lifting huge weight. That's basically what most people would expect. The coolest part about weightlifting is watching the smaller guys lift more than seems possible. Ok, fine. The coolest part is obviously watching hot girls put impossible weight over their heads. If I had never known about weightlifting, I would be struck by the grace and speed of the lifts. Anyone previously concerned about looking "bulky" or being labeled a "meathead" will be impressed by complete diversity of lifters - in age, height, weight, gender, and ethnicity.

From an outside perspective, it's not all hot girls and heavy weights. The current state of *American weightlifting* is a little bleak. It is a physically tough sport, with very little support in the US. Weightlifters seldom get scholarships, and often get mistaken for body builders or power lifters. Most kids have no idea the sport even exists. While most professional athletes make millions, the top lifters only get medals. Consequently, the US seldom performs well at the Olympics. So, even if you find someone who could be an amazing weightlifter, you're basically asking them to give up fame and fortune to play on a losing team for no money and little recognition.

So, how can we change this? Crossfit may be the best thing to happen to *American Weightlifting*. While some may complain about the new use of the lifts - high reps and sometimes shotty form - CrossFit has introduced thousands of new athletes to weightlifting. As we learn more, we bring more coaches and athletes, men and women, and adults and youths to weightlifting. More and more, schools are seeing the benefits of weightlifting, as a standalone sport, or as a powerful strength and conditioning program. My favorite segment of the movie featured Hassle Free Barbell Club. Paul and Kevin Doherty each created a high school weightlifting program. The result? The kids LOVE it. Besides getting fitter and stronger, these kids are learning discipline and respect. All of the coaches in the film are improving lives - one person at a time. And that is EXACTLY the reason we opened CrossFit 314. We are passionate about fitness and more passionate about people. Stay tuned for some exciting news as we expand our weightlifting program to better serve you and to grow the sport of weightlifting in America.

Like Jerry Springer with his final thought, I will say this. Buy this movie. The release is November 16th, and you can pre-order the digital download or the DVD here. Buy it. Watch it. Watch it again. Lift some weights. Watch it again. It will change the way you think about weightlifting and inspire you to grow the sport. Also, did I mention there are hot girls lifting weights?