

“The Road To 1,000”

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“Yo, have you heard of the thousand-pound club?”

“The what?”

“The thousand-pound club. It’s something the football players do.”

“What is it?”

“You max on bench, squat, and hang clean and try to total a thousand pounds. Then you get one of those shirts. I think I’m going to try to do it. I don’t know if I’ll make it though, but you probably could.” And with that simple conversation in the spring of my freshman year an idea was planted in my head. All of a sudden I had found something that would put me in an elite category, and I wanted it.

The first time I can remember going to the weight room was when I was five years old. I wasn’t lifting then, but I was curious to see what was going on behind those doors at the YMCA. What I saw absolutely dumbfounded me. “So, you pick up that thing and move it, and then you do it again? Sweet...” I was completely uninterested in this and was struggling to grasp the idea of how anybody could be interested in this.

Then, as I grew older, the thought of lifting weights didn’t seem like such a bad idea. As my maturity and development progressed, so did my goals, always seeming to fluctuate between trying to add pounds to my emaciated frame, trying to increase the size of what little muscle I did have, and finally trying to get stronger. All of this, however, was done without any real planning or goal setting. First of all, I was too young, in both chronological years and training years, to set any decent short- and long-term goals. I didn’t know my body well enough to understand how it would adapt to training, and more than likely assumed that I would benefit from a nice, linear progression. It was my father who first enlightened me that there would be plateaus along the road, subsequently shattering my plans of consistent gains.

By the time I reached high school lifting had become a training necessity rather than a training option. And even though the intensity of my lifts increased significantly over these four years, I was still in the dark as far as what my true capabilities were. In a sense, I would completely start over every six to twelve months as my body finally started to go through the changes I had been anticipating. However, it wasn’t until my junior year of high school that I really made a commitment to the weight room, often lifting before school three days a week as well as during gym class. This extra effort, as well as the ability of my body to progress, allowed me to see great increases in size, strength, and weight over the next two years. But, just as before, all of this was done without any definitive goals in mind outside of just simply progressing in those three areas.

The summer after graduating high school and the fall of my freshman year of college I began to formulate more short-term goals regarding my body weight. Of course, all I knew is that I wanted to gain weight, with no real inclination of what these gains would mean for me. Still, I would say that I wanted to weigh 210 by the start of school or 220 by the start of practice, or some other meaningless number

like that. As juvenile as this process was, it did give me something to work for. Then, a few months later the idea of moving over 1,000 pounds in three lifts was introduced to me, and I had something that, I felt, was worth going after. All of a sudden the weight room transformed from a place that would help me become a better basketball player to a place where I could set myself apart from everybody else. This transformation in the environment was the product of a transformation in my attitude, going from doing the exercises that were written on my sheet to attacking every exercise once I entered my world.

Despite this newly defined goal, it wasn't until I broke 400 pounds in the squat the end of my sophomore year, and then hit 435 a year later, that I really felt this goal was reachable. Up until then it was always lofty. It was there motivating me and keeping me hungry, but I was unsure of whether this feat would be achievable. Heading in to the summer after my junior year, though, I had figured out the numbers that I thought would give me the best chance at breaking a grand. I guessed I would need to have a 450 squat, a 315 bench, and a 240 hang clean, bringing my total in at 1,005 pounds. These numbers gave me a clearly defined plan of attack; it was just a matter of preparing my body to reach them.

Summer came and went, and after all of the hours under the bar the day finally arrived where I would test. My squat was much better than expected, my bench was less than I had hoped, and heading in to that final lift I had all the confidence in the world I would move the weight I needed to. After a few attempts at lighter weights, I put the weight on the bar that I predicted I would need to hit four months prior, 240 pounds. While I held the weight in my hands I took a moment to reflect on the journey that I had been on, specifically the previous two and a half years. I remembered the days when I felt hungry and excited, as well as the days when I felt burned out and tired. All of them helped me get to that point, standing on the platform, with 240 pounds in my hands. Then I loaded and extended my hips and caught the bar under my chin. The journey was complete.

It's crazy, you know, what an idea and a goal can do to your actions. What are the goals you have, and how are you going to go about achieving them? Much like the 90-day wonders I told you about, what is your plan to allow you to take baby steps every day to get you closer to your destination? With less than four months until 2011, what are you going to accomplish in this time, or are you going to ride out the rest of the year and blame the lack of productivity on the changing of seasons and the shorter days? Find something you can get excited about accomplishing. Find your thousand-pound club.

Here's to faith, strength, and passion, all in the pursuit of health.

Get big or die tryin'.

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Charlie Cates is the owner and head performance coach of Self Made (<http://selfmadefitness.com>), and is a Certified Personal Trainer and Performance Enhancement Specialist through NASM. He has worked with athletes of all ages and

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