

# What Is Better Than Winning?

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Winning is just about the end all, be all for all things competitive. Everyone wants to be a winner. It doesn't matter the competition. In weightlifting, winning might be getting on the podium or simply hitting new personal records. If winning is the apex, then what could be better than winning? Let's take a moment and see if there is anything out there. You may benefit from some prerequisite reading:

[Are you better than a 9-year-old?](#)

[It always matters.](#)

## 2019 YOUTH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

We took 3 athletes to this event and they all performed extremely well! All 3 made us all proud with the effort they displayed. There are always lessons to be learned from these types of events, and I will share one that might give at least 1 item that is better than winning.

Caitlin Everett is a new lifter to our team. At age 12, Caitlin has already enjoyed what a lot of people would consider a successful weightlifting career. Prior to joining our club, she has won a couple of youth national championships and even a best lifter award. She had a shot for 3 championships in a row! Had you asked her prior to this year's event if there is anything that would be better than winning a third straight title, I'm sure the answer would have been "No!".

We started training together in December and made a nice PR of 92 at our state meet the following January. After having a really nice Junior Nationals and setting another PR of 101, I challenged her to forget about being a 40kg lifter and just focus on increasing her total. We set goals of 50kg for the snatch, 62kg in the CJ, and (my personal favorite) 41kg body weight. That would mean, at least for us, we would be set in the 45kg category at youth nationals.

The 4 months of training finally complete, but there are still questions about whether Caitlin will win or be competitive in the heavier category. Looking at the start list we could have decided to be in the 40kg category and would have easily won with her first attempts in both lifts. A "Three-pete"!

Instead of the easy way, Caitlin had to absolutely had to step up to her competition. She was in a body weight category giving up significant amounts of body weight. Even competing against girls that cut weight, putting her at more of a disadvantage. Instead of winning with her openers, we are now competing with every single lift. Every lift more magnified than the previous lift.

At the end of the competition, we have the final clean and jerk and the ability to go for the win. Our goal clean and jerk was 62kg, which we just made on our 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt. We now needed 64kg for the win. Caitlin cleans the weight, but unfortunately is not able to

make the jerk. There are some tears; however, tears of excitement and happiness! She did not care about getting second place. Tears of excitement and happiness from putting it all on the line, cleaning 64kg, and pride in her personal performance. Caitlin took a risk and reaped a huge reward trading an 'easy win' for learning what it takes to compete.

Reflecting back, we both learned a lot from each other in that competition. I learned a lot about Caitlin. During some wizardry with some weight changes, Caitlin also learned a lot about me to place more trust and confidence in our partnership. None of this is learned with the 'easy win'. Which makes at least 1 thing better than winning and setting PRs.

### JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

OK, great Bobby, that is what you are supposed to do with youth athletes. But you must be focused on winning at some point. To that I say "Nah. It's all about performance."

Recently, I travelled to Fiji as part of Team USA coach Alexandra Thornton in the Junior World Championships. This is an extremely elite event. If there were ever an event to focus on winning or setting PRs, most people would say this would be it. Don't get me wrong, I want my lifters to hit PRs all the time, but we focus on performance and taking what the competition tells us to take.

Coming into this event, we were a borderline A/B session lifter. We would have a different strategy for either session. Turns out we are in the B session with 7 other lifters. We were close to the top of the B session. Our goal was to place as high as possible for team points. The top lifter in the session would place no worse than 9<sup>th</sup> overall.

Our goals for this meet were 86/108 and current PRs were 84/105. We remained conservative in our snatch opener with 78 and then 82. Prior to our final snatch, there was only 1 more lifter from Japan with 83 for her final attempt after making 80 on her first attempt and missing 83 on her second. At the time, we had 84 as our final attempt. If Japan makes 83, we take 84. On a miss, we get to attempt a PR at 85. Japan missed, and we missed as well, taking a 2kg lead into the CJ. We also had a 6kg lead on Australia.

Going into the CJ, we felt very confident with lifts and 100, 104, 108. We declared 98 for our opening attempt and Japan and Australia both declared 100. We stayed conservative and were willing to stay at 98, and just before it was our time to go, Japan lowers their opening to 98, and they open before us. Japan would miss the first 2 attempts before making it on their 3<sup>rd</sup>, while we make it on our opening attempt. The only person that has a shot of placing higher than us is Australia, opening at 100. Once they make 100, we take 100 for our second, knowing they must beat us by 7 in the CJ. Once Australia made 103, we also made 103, putting the us out of reach of Australia and winning the B session.

At the end of the event, we finished in 8<sup>th</sup> place. Had we made our current PR total we would have been 7<sup>th</sup> and if we hit the numbers we set as our goals would have placed 5<sup>th</sup>. Now I am not saying that is a problem, having your game plan set to PR, but we found our self in a unique opportunity to win the session. Without know what was going to happen in the A session, all we had was the information in front of us at that time. If we guess wrong, and are too aggressive, we could have left the door open for another country to catch us. By blocking out PRs, we focused on what we had to do to compete with the B session.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Do not get me wrong. Winning is an important aspect of sports and in life. However, winning is the final product. Tangible and intangible items must work together for there to be a winner and a loser. Stay focused on winning but stay cautious that it doesn't blind you from intangible lessons along the way.

*“You play to win the game.”*

*– Herm Edwards*

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I like this quote. Think about it a bit outside of context and see that is says play to win “the” game. This is much different than just “a” (singular) game. The game never ends. What it takes to win today, may not be what it takes tomorrow. Normally, it never is. So, chose your wins wisely.