

STRENGTH IN FOCUS: ERIN BARTON'S ROAD TO EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

INTERVIEW WITH ERIN BARTON

Erin Barton stands out in the weightlifting world not just for the weights she lifts but for the sheer grit she shows in facing down every challenge that comes her way. Her approach is all about pushing limits, tackling both the highs and lows with equal determination. Here's a look into how Erin preps for competition, handles the pressures of performing on an international stage, and aims to hit new personal records, all while staying true to her unique journey. This isn't just about weightlifting; it's about what it takes to be a top athlete when the weights are down and the stage is set.



Erin embarked on her weightlifting journey at the age of 30, and now in her fourth year, her achievements include European Championship appearances, World Championship competition, double Gold Medallist at both English and British Championships, all within the 71kg category.

British Weight Lifting: Can you walk us through your training regimen leading up to the European Championships?

Erin Barton: I had a 10-week training block to prep for Europeans. My sessions dropped from 6 to 5x a week, while we worked on pushing myself to lift heavy regularly. We needed to push my openers up, so we were working on hitting these numbers twice weekly to build for this. Sessions are usually around 3 hours including snatch, clean and jerk, squats, pulls, and accessory work.

BWL: How did you adjust your training in response to any challenges you faced?

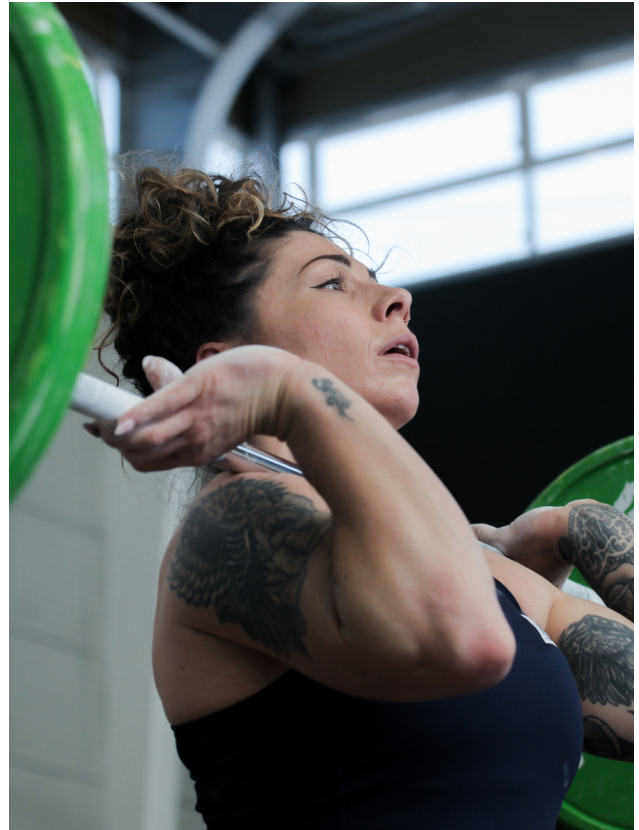
EB: I've been dealing with a shoulder issue, which has impacted training. I just have to do what I can do, make sure I'm doing prehab/rehab work and focus on what I can control.

BWL: What was your mindset going into the competition, especially competing in Sofia?

EB: We were working towards a certain total, and I felt ready and excited to rise to the challenge. Last year I was still working on my confidence and consistency to lifting on the platform, but this year I'm eager to put kgs on my total. **Every competition has taught me something I can use to fuel the fire to get better.**

BWL: Can you describe the atmosphere at the event and how it influenced your performance?

EB: I loved how the stage/platform looked with the lights and music. When I'd watched other weight classes compete it was a great vibe and got me really excited to get on the stage myself.



BWL: How do you feel about your performance at the championships?



EB: Initially, I was gutted because I didn't get the total I wanted. But there were so many positives to take away, my opening attempts were 8kg heavier than I've ever attempted, my opening snatch was a platform PB, and I attempted all-time PBs on the platform which I've never had the confidence to do before. Also, my total was my PB total of 2023, so I'm really happy to be starting the year off there.

BWL: Were there any lifts or moments that were particularly memorable or challenging for you?

EB: I felt really confident going into this competition, that was an amazing feeling. Making the first snatch is always a great feeling for me, a bit of relief too... But to know I had a platform PB on my first lift of the competition was awesome.

I got dizzy on my second jerk attempt and missed it. Then repeating the weight gave me some anxiety; I still missed the jerk. **But you have to feel the fear and do it anyway!** The second clean was better too...

BWL: How has your support system (coaches, teammates, family) contributed to your journey to the European Championships?

EB: I was super grateful to have my personal coach Mem in the competition with me alongside Dave and Stu this time which really helped. Also, Mem and the rest of the training crew are a huge help. Mem really understands how my brain works and helps do things in a way I understand. My family is a massive support, as well as my friends. To have people understand how important training is and regularly check in is so important. However, I'm usually someone that will deal with things by myself, so I pray a lot. I'm heavy on the thank you God!



BWL: Can you share a moment when their support made a difference for you?

EB: When I was going through a difficult time with training, I was crying a lot and started having panic attacks. I felt awful for bringing the vibe down in training; they were all so supportive and their words definitely helped me through that time. My parents are a huge support; I'm incredibly grateful they even cook my meals for me!



BWL: What were some of the obstacles you encountered during your preparation or at the event, and how did you overcome them?

EB: My brain is my biggest obstacle (haha). And it's a constant learning journey; I have a lot of different strategies within my daily routines that then help me in training and competition. **I meditate a lot, to help calm my brain when I need to and control anxiety and my emotional responses.** I've had some issues with my shoulder, so some sessions the pain would prevent me from doing what I wanted to do, which is frustrating. But nothing in that moment I can do, so I just did what I could. I've seen physios and got a rehab plan in place which has helped too. Also, knowing that when you train at this level you're not going to be completely pain-free, so as long as I'm not making it worse, you have to know when to push through sometimes. Keep speaking with your coach about pain levels and your training plan.

BWL: What are your next goals, and how has participating in the European Championships prepared you for them?

EB: My goals for this year are a 100 snatch and a 130 clean and jerk at least. I was hoping to get those on the platform at Europeans, but it's fuelled my fire in pursuit of those numbers. The ultimate goal is to keep progressing and see where it takes me.

BWL: Are there any specific areas you're looking to improve or focus on?

EB: Always technique! I'm physically strong, but small technical issues let me down on the big lifts.

BWL: What advice would you give to someone looking to compete in weightlifting at a high level?

EB: **Have a solid 'why'. If the WHY is powerful, the HOW is easy.** Also, have your goals and absolutely strive for greatness, but you can't control everything that happens. So what's helped me is I detach myself from the path I think I need to take to get there. **Control what you can control: hard work, sleep, recovery, nutrition,** etc. But when things look different from what you expected, or things go wrong (e.g., injury), try not to let it affect you too much. Use it as an opportunity to work on other things that you can do. And also ENJOY it, be proud of yourself, and celebrate your wins no matter how big or small.





BWL: How do you stay motivated, and what tips can you share for maintaining focus and dedication?

EB: I'm definitely not always motivated, but I have worked really hard at becoming disciplined. Work on small achievable things you can build into your routine; going to training now is something I have to do. It's not negotiable. It does help knowing I'm going to train with the rest of Mem's squad though.

Maintaining focus can be difficult because I get easily distracted, so sometimes it's a case of headphones in and focus on what I need to do. I think about lifting cues that I'm working on. I love listening to motivational speeches; they really help me get fired up if I might not be feeling it. It all takes a lot of practice.

Consistent hard work leads to success.

The only bit of advice I really need is KEEP GOING. Sometimes it's easy, and sometimes it's really hard. But as long as you keep going, you can't fail.

