As a strongwoman I’ve achieved some pretty unreal things I never thought I could do. I’ve pulled an A-4 jet that weighed more than 14,000 pounds. I’ve flipped a 700-pound tire on NBC’s Today show. I’ve lifted a stone weighing 245 pounds, and I’ve pulled several SUVs and trucks. I’ve had my own documentary on ESPN2, part of a series called Toneless. As the 2004 national champion professional strongwoman in the sport of strongman, I’ve met the most amazing and dedicated people—but most of all, I am constantly challenged in different ways.

“Strongman” is the name of a sport that requires feats of strength, speed and stamina. Competitions involve multiple events that test an athlete’s endurance. Every competition is different, but they usually include five or six timed maximum-distance events that test an athlete’s strength, speed and stamina.

Initially, the lifting aspect of strongman was extremely tough for me. I started off with light weights and mastered the movements under much scrutiny from training partners. When I increased the weights, I no longer could rely on my athletic capabilities.

Many men and women strongman competitors have emphasized to me the importance of understanding techniques to help me improve—and more important, they helped keep me safe and reduced my risk of being injured. I was not allowed to touch the implements (tires, stones, etc.) until I had safety and technique under my belt. Art McDermott, a coach and mentor for me since I started, has helped me constantly rework my techniques if they ever would have imagined their daughter competing in strongman, I think they would say no, but they have always been encouraging about any endeavor I tackled. Once they were assured I was in good hands with my training partners, they started enjoying the sport almost as much as I do. My mom and dad have made it to nearly all my competitions.

Competitors and promoters of competitions are always challenging strongman athletes to lift strange, heavy objects faster and for longer distances. Events can range from lifting a series of atlas stones or pulling a jet to dead-lifting a trailer with a cheerleader in tow. I once had to run a timed medley gripping full beer kegs. I love competing in strongman and have been motivated to train continually during the past four and a half years.

During my senior year of high school, my then-boyfriend introduced me to the sport. I am always up for a challenge and so, with some hesitation, I agreed to try it. Like most young women I was reluctant to “get big” or become a stereotypical power lifter. Many men and women strongman competitors have emphasized the importance of understanding techniques to help me improve—and more important, they helped keep me safe and reduced my risk of being injured. I was not allowed to touch the implements (tires, stones, etc.) until I had safety and technique under my belt. Art McDermott, a coach and mentor for me since I started, has helped me constantly rework my techniques if they ever would have imagined their daughter competing in strongman, I think they would say no, but they have always been encouraging about any endeavor I tackled. Once they were assured I was in good hands with my training partners, they started enjoying the sport almost as much as I do. My mom and dad have made it to nearly all my competitions.

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I have done very well in this sport without male steroids or illegal supplements. My muscles have taken a healthy, fit shape. I am strong and I look feminine.