

**Going strong - Clark County dairy farmer pumped up for national strongman contest**  
by Mick Kuzjak

Carl Foemmel is driven to living life to the fullest these days.

The Chili-area dairy farmer is eating massive quantities of food, enough to sustain four men and, after a hard day of chores on the farm, he goes out to lift 320-pound "stones" until well into the night.

There's method, not madness, to that extreme lifestyle. Foemmel, 25, is taking serious aim at a championship at the National Amateur Strongman Competition being held in Louisville, Ky., this Saturday.

There, he will be among the competitors facing uncommon tests of strength, including repeatedly hefting concrete "stones" up on a raised platform and pulling a loaded truck nearly 100 feet. The event will be held in front of a large cheering crowd. It will be the kind of competitive atmosphere, Foemmel said, "that gets me fired up."

Armed with the exceptional strength, agility and endurance in a sport that requires nothing less to be the best, he's a natural.

But, according to Foemmel, it all started purely by chance two years ago. A poster at a fitness club announcing an upcoming strongman competition in Madison caught his eye, and his interest. "I thought it was something to try, something to compete in," he said.

The excitement and adrenal rush of the competition at that first event had him immediately hooked. Since then, it's been the added bonus of winning that has fueled his growing passion for the sport. Foemmel has competed in five sanctioned strongman events since August of 2004, finishing first in the last four contests. "He's "on a bit of a roll," he modestly admits.

Foemmel credits much of his recent success to a new focus, and discipline, in his training regimen. He's been teaming up with training partner Kevin Grap, owner of Central Wisconsin Broadcasting station in

Neillsville where he comes to work out every other night.

Foemmel said that Grap, with his power lifting experience, helps keep him focused. "He knows a lot about technique and nutrition. Together, we come up with some good ideas," said Foemmel.

Foemmel brings his own set of natural attributes, including size. He never was one to be mistaken for the 90-pound weakling of the old Charles Atlas ads. He's always been big – "a fat kid," he recalls with a forgiving smile. Now, through years of weight training, Foemmel carries a chiseled 290 pounds on his powerful six-foot frame, with a 56-inch chest and 20-1/2 inch biceps.

Agility, as well as endurance, are two more of Foemmel's strong suits in strongman competitions. An excellent athlete, he played football at Marshfield High School and later at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Nutrition is a key ingredient in preparing for strength competitions and it looms large in Foemmel's daily diet that can only be described as Paul Bunyanesque.

After a concentrated protein milk shake first thing in the morning, breakfast is the first of three main meals for Foemmel who routinely downs two and one-half cups of oatmeal with a couple of scoops of peanut butter, two bananas and a dozen egg whites. "I used to eat whole eggs, but the doctor said I shouldn't," he added.

A typical noon meal for Foemmel these days includes two pounds of hamburger with six to eight slices of wheat bread. Steaks or spaghetti are part of the usual fare for supper. In between, he snacks on liberal portions of cottage cheese and fruits. But, he does allow himself some cookies and other sweets, Foemmel admits.

"It comes out to between 8,000 and 10,000 calories a day," he said. Foemmel said that his family, which includes wife, Nona, and an 18-month-old daughter, has gotten used to the time he needs to spend in his intense preparation for competition. It's

helped that he's switched his workouts from a fitness club to the relatively quiet confines of the Neillsville High School weight room and WCCN radio station. "I'm getting home at 10 rather than 11:30 at night," he said.

Nona has become one of her husband's biggest fans. She comes to some of his practices and looks forward to the competitions. "She's got more nerves than I do," he said of her seeming calmness during the sound and fury of competition.

On Saturday, Foemmel said late last week, he should be in good shape to take on the 50 to 60 competitors at Louisville. Like him, they come from all walks of life. They include policemen and truck drivers. "There's even a pastor who competes," he said.

Foemmel modestly admits to being quietly confident about his chances of winning the title. "I have a decent shot," he said.

Saturday events will include an overhead 300-pound log press, a truck pull with a loaded Ford F-250 pickup, a farmer's walk carrying 270 pounds in each hand and loading stones, weighing up to 380 pounds, on to an elevated rack.

If Foemmel takes first place, there will be \$1,500 in prize money and a "pro card" in store for him. He will be then be able to compete on the professional strongman circuit, where the potential earnings are much higher.

A week before the Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> National Amateur Strongman Competition, Carl Foemmel took some time for conventional weight training in the Neillsville High School weight room.

One night last week, Carl Foemmel was specifically focused on strongman-style training, lifting a 320-pound "stone" -- a solid ball of concrete -- onto a five-foot high platform. He will be lifting five such stones -- weighing from 270 to 380 pounds each -- in succession at the national competition. His training partner and mentor Kevin Grap (background) served as a spotter during the lift.