

Press Pass Gazette

Mona Pretorius, Mind Games

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The 12th of August, 1988, the future of South African weightlifting and karate was born. Mona Pretorius is a South African weightlifter, a sports psychologist and an international qualified coach. At the age of eight, Mona began karate. This was just the beginning of her very successful sporting career. From an early age she dealt with a lot of hardships, she told me she failed her first grading at a young age and it was very difficult to deal with. After this 'failure' she began to take an interest in sports psychology.

This is when Mona started taking sport very seriously; she took on boxing, kickboxing, MMA, taekwondo. All of these sports would help to improve her karate skills and bring her to the top. When she was 12 years old she asked a local retired weightlifting coach, who



(Left to Right) Shane Roche, Mona Pretorius and Michael O'Leary at the WIT sports complex

previously had athletes at the world championships, to train her. When he said yes, this changed her life. Although Mona had to deal with a lot of remarks about doing weightlifting because of the gender stereotypes in the early 2000's about her 'going to end up looking like a man' and 'ending up in a wheelchair with a broken back in a couple of years', it did not stop her.

For Mona 'finding the balance' between her School life and sports life was difficult. She had to make so many sacrifices in her road to success. Giving up her social life and time to play video games to train was hard, 'I couldn't go out with my friends as I had to train.' Because she made these choices, to train before school in the morning and to train again after school was the difference, paving the way to becoming 6 time karate world champion. Mona Pretorius was always training and improving her weightlifting, 'it (weightlifting) took over from karate, and I just fell in love.'



Pretorius' final snatch of 88kg putting her in 3rd place going into the clean and jerk.

Over her years of weightlifting, Mona, has achieved many accolades. She won a gold medal at the African championships; she competed at the world championships numerous times and competed at the CrossFit games in 2012. Mona holds South African records in the snatch, clean & jerk and in the total in the 63kg weight class.

Mona has placed third at the commonwealth games in 2018, winning a bronze medal. This is an amazing achievement. She described this moment as 'the best feeling ever' and the reason why because 'it is the moment you trained for your whole life for, the early mornings, late nights and hard work all comes down to these 6 lifts. When you go 6 for 6 in a competition it is a special moment and especially doing it at such an important time.' This was the pinnacle of Mona's career. She gained the nickname 'Powerful Pretorius'.

Mona now works as a sports psychologist. Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws on knowledge from many related fields including biomechanics, physiology, kinesiology and psychology. 'You have to be mentally strong and believe in yourself in this sport' says Pretorius. Mona now works with the Romanian



'music helps me stay focused'. Mona before going onto the platform.

national rugby team and works with Eduards Andruskevics on programming for the Irish weightlifting team.

One of Mona's philosophies is to 'slay the dragon before the dragon slays you'. Mona is worth her weight in gold with her knowledge and she is an inspiration for any aspiring athlete as competitions are won and lost in the mind. 'This sport helps build resilience' says Mona. Building self-confidence is very important for Olympic weightlifting and any bit of doubt will result in failure. This is why Mona's profession is the key to weightlifting and why sports psychology is so essential to weightlifting.

Mona was always very focused and motivated, her positive mental attitude, meditation, regular goal setting and visualisation has driven her



Pretorius celebrating her well-earned bronze medal at the commonwealth games.

through her lengthy and successful career.

Now Mona continues to help others and teach them about sports psychology and leading them to sporting glory.

From speaking to Mona and learning at one of her sports psychology seminars I can see that we both share a great love for the sport and it is a feeling all weightlifters should aspire to have. Mona chased her dreams and reached them, what is stopping you?

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