

NEWS FLASH!

**Mark Henry
Cleans the
“Unliftable” Inch
Dumbbell With One
Hand & Push
Presses It at the
2002 AOBs Dinner**

Just over one hundred years ago, or so the story goes, the professional strongman Thomas Inch had a special dumbbell cast that weighed 172 pounds. What makes the dumbbell particularly difficult to lift is the thickness of its handle — almost 2 ½” in diameter. For the first half of the twentieth century, Inch claimed that he was the only man who could lift the huge bell off the floor at all, and he often offered large cash prizes for anyone who could do so. He never had to pay, and it was not until the 1950s when several men in Scotland, including Henry Gray, were able to lift the bell. In the 1990s replicas of the inch Dumbbell began to be manufactured and sold by Sorinex and IronMind Enterprises, and with these replicas available more and more people were able to train with the bell. Soon, a few men managed to lift a replica, a tiny handful managed to actually do a complete deadlift with one. No one, however, including Inch himself, has ever been able to come close to cleaning the dumbbell. No one has had both the grip strength to hold the bell tightly enough during the acceleration through the middle portion of the clean and the wrist strength to turn it over and catch it at the shoulder.

Finally, on June twenty-second, in front of a group of people whose collective knowledge of the early days of the iron game is second to none, Mark Henry did what many thought was impossible. In one powerful movement, he gripped a Sorinex replica of the Inch Dumbbell in his right hand, pulled it to his shoulder in an easy power clean, balanced it, and drove it to arm’s length to the absolute delight of the crowd. Then, in a feat that many in the audience thought was almost equal to the one-hand cleaning of the bell, he walked the ten feet or so to where the bell had rolled after he dropped it, leaned down to the side of his body, grasped the weight with his left hand, deadlifted it as if it were a suitcase, carried it with a level grip for about twenty feet, and not



so gently placed it onto the head table in front of Ken Hall, one of the men being honored that night.

Following Mark’s historic feat, dozens of men gathered around to congratulate him and to try the bell for themselves. There were many grip specialists in attendance this year, and of the many who attempted to lift the bell off the floor, only one, Richard Sorin himself, managed to lift it at all. Mark’s lift has flashed over the “iron grapevine” via the Internet and Tom Black, who covered the event for the Cyberpump website, called the lift “the best documented feat of all the legendary performances and perhaps the most spectacular feat of strength ever performed.” This may be drawing too long a bow, but no one can deny the enormous historic resonance of what Mark accomplished.

Following his performance in front of all the old heroes and afficianadoes — Mark went to the microphone and, in a long and emotional statement, told the crowd that he wanted to do it for Vic’s group and that he wanted them all to know he was lifetime drugfree. He said that he had been inspired by greats of the past like Paul Anderson, Vasily Alexeyev, and Bill Kazmaier, and that he intended to keep on breaking strength records for as long as his body would allow him to do so. What he will do next is unclear, even to Mark, but Vince McMahon has supported him in his quest for immortality and has given him time off to make his recent appearances. In any case, Mark treated those of us who were in the audience on June twenty-second to a truly memorable display of power, proving again that he deserves to be ranked among the strongest men of all time.