
CROSSFIT GAMES

The Man Who First Saw the Potential In The Fittest Woman On Earth

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Shane Orr and Tia with Miles Wydall (Source: Facebook)

Fittest Woman on Earth Tia-Clair Toomey gave us a throwback to where it all started this week, as she returned to her old weightlifting club in Queensland, Australia.

Tia and Shane took the chance to catch up with coach Miles Wydall: “Words don’t even begin to explain what he has done for Shane and I, we are truly lucky to have him apart of our lives.”

Where it all began.

“Technique wise she swung off the bar and hopped back in the snatch and forward in the clean. She also jerked forward and her back flexed a bit in the pull.”

It’s hard to believe Miles Wydall is talking about the most successful female CrossFit athlete in history Tia-Clair Toomey, but take comfort in knowing that even the three-peat champion started somewhere.

Meet Miles.

Miles Wydall is Australia’s top Olympic Weightlifting Coach and with over 25 years’ experience, he boasts an impressive resume. He was Australia’s Head coach at both the Rio (2016) and London (2012) Olympics and every Commonwealth Games since 2010. He runs and coaches at Cougars Weightlifting Coach alongside his wife Angela, in Brisbane Australia.

“I still get the same buzz of excitement when a new lifter walks into the club as I did 25 years ago,” he told the Morning Chalk Up

Miles has produced 34 Australian representatives from scratch, so it’s fair to say he can spot raw talent when he sees it. In 2013, word got out about a 19-year-old woman who could back squat 220 pounds for three and move a 145-pound barbell without any real technique – no surprise Miles was very interested to meet her.

The early days.



Tia Clair at Cougars' Weightlifting Club (Source: Miles Wydall)

Miles recalls Tia and her then-boyfriend Shane Orr regularly driving from their home in Gladstone to Brisbane (about 320 miles) for coaching.

“I also coached them remotely and got her a 15kg bar as they did not have one at the time, they were very fast learners and picked things up well,” Miles told the Morning Chalk Up.

Those early days were just as much about teaching Shane to become a coach, as it was drilling Tia: “I was then involved working with Shane in lifting competitions helping with any advice I could,” Miles said.

They’ve become the so-called ‘Orr-some’ combo and Miles attributes much of Tia’s success to Shane: “Apart from her obvious genetic potential, she has a very supportive and smart partner and coach,” he said.

“Both of them seek out the best people they can find to learn as much as they can. In the beginning, they used to drive six hours each way to come to the club to be coaches after a full week of work – that’s dedication for you.”



Shane Orr, Miles Wydall and Tia (Source: Facebook)

The respect is mutual with Tia devoting an entire chapter of her memoir “How I Became the Fittest Woman on Earth: My Story So Far” to Miles.

The Gold Medal Moment.

Not only is Tia the first woman to claim three Fittest Woman on Earth titles back-to-back, she's also the reigning Commonwealth Olympic Weightlifting champion, claiming gold in the 58kg category in 2018.

The win is something Miles still gets emotional about discussing with the Morning Chalk Up: "I have never seen anybody with such a determined look on their face in the warm-up room on that day – it was almost scary," he recalls.

"We knew she needed the 114 (kgs) that she actually missed in training the week before. The crowd on the day was amazing, the roar when she came out was something else ... when she got the lift it was a very special moment."

Tia would claim gold – beating out Canadian weightlifter Tali Darsigny by just one kilogram (2.205 lbs) – with an 87kg snatch, 114kg clean and jerk for a total of 201kg.

Miles also coached Tia the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and while Tia has decided not to try and qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Games, he says she's a prime example of being competitive in both CrossFit and Olympic Weightlifting.



Miles, Shane and Tia at Commonwealth Games, 2018. (Source: Miles Wydall)

The perfect balance.

Miles attributes CrossFit to introducing a lot more people to Olympic Weightlifting. He now trains dozens of competitive CrossFitters in Brisbane, Australia and claims the trick to mastering both is communication.

“It’s very important I work with their CrossFit coach on programming,” he said.

“If they do my program and then do their normal WOD on top without any adjustments it can lead to injury and overtraining.”

That being said the secret to success, particularly in Tia’s work, is just hard work and dedication.

Miles recalls a time soon after the World Championships: “She did a very hard lifting session and then went to the local CrossFit box to do three hard WOD’s in one afternoon.”

“She is very tough mentally in competition and in training – she has no excuses – well none that Shane accepts,” he laughed.

[MILES WYDALL OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING](#)