IPF World Equipped Open Powerlifting Championships 2026
Istanbul, Türkiye

Jørgen and Eva arrived in Türkiye early, in anticipation of the meeting held in place of the Extraordinary General Assembly, which was cancelled only a few days before the championships. Their time was well spent sampling local kebabs and testing the warm-up room equipment.





On Tuesday, Jørgen pulled a double-session jury duty, where there was questionable spotting as many lifters had 'some help' standing up from their squats.

I took the jury for the 74s and the 83s on Wednesday, and the 74s delivered an epic battle between the legendary Jaroslaw Olech (POL) and Lawson Lillo (USA), a Master 2 and a Junior going head to head for the title.

Olech took the win with 865kg and 12.5kg to spare. He squatted 360kg, benched 205kg and pulled 300kg, setting Master 2 world records in all three of squat, bench and total. Lillo (32 years younger than Olech) took the Junior total record with 852.5kg. He won the bench outright with 242.5kg, 37.5kg more than Olech, who in turn out-squatted him by exactly 37.5kg. Olech's 12.5kg deadlift advantage decided it - a thrilling battle to witness from the Jury table!

That evening Nicki and Victoria arrived, and we had dinner in the hotel.

Thursday began with news that shook the equipped community: Titan, the beloved powerlifting gear manufacturer, is closing its doors after 45 years, leaving real uncertainty around the future of equipped lifting. We walked to the shops to discover the local snacks and pistachio-flavoured everything. While Nicki was enthused by the selection of sweet treats, and Jørgen by the lack of Turkish beer in the shop, Victoria and I were equally (if not, more) distracted by the friendly cats we pet along the way.

Friday was Nicki's day. We had an early breakfast as a team, before we all went to rest up. At 14:30, we completed equipment check and waited patiently for Nicki's weigh-in slot. With a low lot number and bodyweight of 104,35kg, we knew we needed every kilo in squats to hold his first place projection.

Nicki nailed a smooth 300kg raw squat in warmups, between sets with Team Canada and Team Sweden, and an equipped squat of 400kg before he was ready for the platform. Opening on 430kg, the heaviest opener of the day, Nicki's first squat was overturned by the jury for depth, so we retook 430kg on the second. We got his left knee wrap off soon after Nicki returned to the holding area, however the right knee wrap had a mind of its own. I pulled, Jørgen pulled, I pulled again, Team USA pulled and nothing… at this point, Nicki was starting to make odd noises, so Jørgen did the only conceivable thing possible, which was to go at the wrap with his teeth. Needless to say, that didn't work either and Team Canada saved the day with a pair of pliers. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to document this moment on film, however a stray cat later in the week played the part of Jørgen in the below reenactment:





Nicki didn't want to take his second attempt after all the commotion, but once he could feel his toes again we convinced him otherwise. Good thing, because 430 got three white lights, securing gold in the squat. We narrowly missed 446kg for the world record on depth. Nicki's squat was 20kg clear of the next best (Hoel, NOR, 410).

Bench went well, surprising us all with gold after 3/3, finishing on 302.5kg, just 2.5kg off his best.

Deadlifts: 300kg and 317.5kg went up easily, but 325kg was missed on grip. That left Nicki on 1050kg, level with the deadlift specialist Ian Bell (USA) taking third by being only 50 grams lighter. Silver was only 2.5kg away (Bilyi, 1052.5kg), and a successful 325kg would have taken it. Knut Einar Skår (NOR) won with 1067.5kg.

Karen arrived that evening, with one day to settle in before her own platform time. We celebrated the team's first two gold medals with dinner in the hotel.

After breakfast on Saturday, the team, along with members from Team Great Britain, took an Uber downtown to see Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, the Bosphorus Bridge which connects Europe and Asia, and many more cats - a welcome break before the final day of lifting.



The last day had a long wait until the 2pm weigh-in for Karen, but we knew the day would be over before long, as the EuroSport sessions run fast and furious.

Karen was lot number 6 out of 8 and had the same bodyweight as Valerie von Gleichen (GER) at 83.80kg. Even though we had the higher lot number, it's whoever gets the lift or total first that takes the medal!

We warmed up with Ankie Timmers (LUX). Ankie went on to set the Master 1 bench world record at a massive 200kg.

After squat warm-ups felt a little heavy, we opened just 5kg lighter than planned on 275kg. Karen's first squat wasn't deep enough, so we retook 275kg on the second, which got three white lights. For her third, we took an 11.5kg jump to 286.5kg to extend her own World Record by 0.5kg, but it was also unfortunately called too high. The 275kg was still the best squat of the day, 12.5kg clear of von Gleichen (262.5kg), and earned Karen squat gold!

Bench press ran smoother. A technical slip on the 110kg opener meant retaking it on the second, followed by a strong 115kg on the third.

To be safe, we opted for a lighter deadlift opener, dropping from 207.5kg to 200kg, which moved like a true opener should. That gave Karen a 590kg total, but put the overall podium out of reach. We put 210kg in as the second attempt, thinking that if all went well we could get to 217.5 or 220kg on the third and stay in the race for a deadlift medal. Sadly, the 210kg only made it up to her knees. Karen felt her back pulling and wanted to

opt out of her third pull, but she went out for it anyway, and it was indeed glued to the floor. She finished 7th taking the gold in Squat, with Rhaea Stinn (CAN) taking the title on 657.5kg.





The night ended with a buffet banquet and some well-deserved local beers, and we are pleased to say that everyone made it to their shuttle on time the next morning…



- Megan Leighton, Head Coach