

Because these tournaments earn the lumberjacks bragging rights and only a few thousand bucks, Jewett was sharing a room with Jean-Pierre Mercier, his partner in the two-man crosscut event. "In the morning," Mercier remembers, "I asked him, 'Is something wrong?' He said, 'Oh, no, no. Just a cold: '"

But when the ultracompetitive Jewett couldn't finish one of his timed woodcutting events because of fatigue, even he had to admit there was a problem. He drove 18 hours through a blizzard back home to upstate New York to have blood drawn. He'd been experiencing other symptoms too- he couldn't stay warm at night, even under sheets and a sleeping bag, with a fire roaring.

While waiting for his blood test results, he returned to splitting wood. "I was at work the day the doctor called and said, 'You need to go straight to the hospital.'"

Jewett finished unloading a trailer of wood ("I was like, 'If I'm dead, I'm dead anyway. Might as well unload the trailer'") and checked himself in. He'd lost 85 percent of his renal function and had stage 5 kidney failure. There is no stage 6, Jewett says. "You're done after that: "

FIVE YEARS LATER, AT AGE 43, JEWETT STANDS behind a decommissioned dairy barn in his hometown of Pittsford, New York, surveying stack upon stack of maple, ash, walnut, and oak. "This is all me," he says. "Twenty-five thousand pieces of wood, split with an ax and stacked by hand. This is my training area."

After a successful kidney transplant (the donor was his father), Jewett is back in action as a Timbersports star. It's clear to him now that ignoring the problem was more stubbornness than courage- Jewett had no family history of kidney disease and assumed he could fight through the symptoms- but that same iron will has driven his recovery. Employing a relentless exercise regimen, he's fought his way back into the best shape of his life.

Jewett rides a bike 60 miles a week. He plays soccer 3 nights a week. He does 90 minutes of Timbersports training everyday- that's 90 minutes of sawing or swinging an ax, a routine all about explosive power.



Dave Jewett split and stacked these 25,000 pieces of wood between January and March of this year.

With the right technique, Jewett says, he'll rely more on muscle mass and core strength than on his lungs, which is good because he still tires more quickly than he'd like. Timbersports, he says, is "more of a drag race than a Nascar race." It requires rowing and pulling motions in the arms, shoulders, and back, plus a solid foundation in his quads and hamstrings.

A few times a week, he lifts rudimentary free weights in his unfinished basement. "I could probably bench close to 300 pounds," Jewett says, "if I had 300 pounds." So he just piles every weight he has onto the bar and then lets it rip. He also does pull downs, military presses, biceps curls, pushups. He tries to knock out the whole routine in 30 minutes, with minimal rest- explosive, like splitting wood.

"So I'll do that one day, and the next day I'll do a whole workout on the pullup bar," he says. "I'll do six workouts on the pullup bar. Then I'll take a couple of days off to ride my bike and chop wood. And then I'll go back and do it again."

JEWETT LIVES IN A 90-YEAR-OLD BUNGALOW about a block from his old high school. The house is full of wood: oak floors, chestnut detailing, a table made from old-growth maple.

In a case on the kitchen counter are his pills: Jewett takes nine in the morning and six at night. They're a reminder of his vulnerability, but he doesn't let his condition define him. He doesn't even use his transplant as motivation when training. He just takes his medicine and then goes about building the strongest body he can. "They say you peak around 40. I'm 43. I dunno, I broke two world records already this year."

He recently won his third Timbersports world championship in the one-man crosscut event, nicknamed the "misery whip," by dragging a 6'4" steel blade through a 20" white pine log in 13 seconds. He also competes in the springboard, climbing a tree using platforms about 10 inches wide. And he does the hot saw, wielding a 55- to 60-pound chain saw powered by a raging 325cc snowmobile engine.

Jewett competes in 15 to 20 tournaments a year; he placed third overall in this year's Stihl Timbersports series national championships. He's resumed his side businesses too: chain saw carving (eagles, bears) and a seasonal gig selling wreaths and Christmas trees at the Pittsford Dairy, which has adopted Jewett as a kind of mascot. The company store even sells an ice cream flavor called Lumberjacked.

Indeed, all of Pittsford, a town of 30,000 near Rochester, has rallied around its native son. Lumberjacks, after all, are self-insured, and kidney surgery is not cheap. Jewett had lost his beefjerky sponsorship and finally had to stop working. So after his transplant, a local bar, Thirsty's, raised \$30,000 toward his medical bills in an event organized by his friend Shannon Hookway. They even had "Do It for Jewett" temporary tattoos. "There isn't a person who lives in this town, or anywhere near it, who wasn't here," Hookway says.

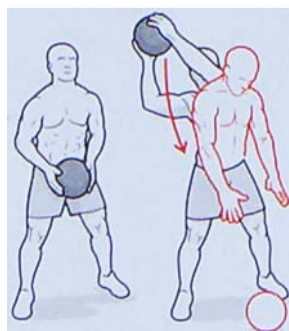
"Certainly in that little village of his, he's a god," says Rochester sports columnist Leo Roth. "Everyone knows who Dave Jewett is."

Build Backwoods Strength

Weave these exercises from Tony Gentilcore, c.s.c.s., into your weekly routine to chisel your core and create hard-hitting rotational power.

ROTATIONAL SLAM

Hold a medicine ball at waist level with your feet shoulder-width apart. Swing the ball to the right as you lift it overhead and then throw it forcefully at the floor. Catch it and repeat, alternating sides each time. Do 3 sets of 20 reps (10 to each side).



SCOOPROSS

Hold a medicine ball at waist level and stand with your left side 3 feet from a wall, feet shoulder-width apart. Scoop the ball toward your right hip and then quickly pivot and toss the ball at the wall. Catch it and repeat. Do 3 sets of 20 reps (10 to each side).

