

The IPF's Pursuit of Monopoly: Rule 14.9 and Beyond
By Myles Kantor

Part 1: Threat as Customer Service

...free competition was wasteful, monopoly efficient. And so he simply set about achieving that efficient monopoly. There were some oil wholesalers in Brooklyn...who refused to see, to recognize, the vision of Vito Corleone...With these men Vito Corleone threw up his hands in despair and sent Tessio to Brooklyn to set up a headquarters and solve the problem. Warehouses were burned, truckloads of olive-green oil were dumped to form lakes in the cobbled waterfront streets.

-Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*

Let us begin at the beginning. Rule 14.9 of the IPF Constitution states:

Any lifter, coach, referee or official who competes or participates in an international Powerlifting or Bench Press competition not organised, sanctioned or approved by the IPF shall not be permitted to take part in any IPF international or regional competition for a period of 12 months from the date of that non-approved competition.

Rule 14.9 was passed at the IPF Congress in 2005 and enforced for the first time in 2006. The minutes of the 2008 IPF General Assembly refer to 14.9 in relation to "athletes participating in outlaw 'federations'." (See page twelve at http://www.powerlifting-ipf.com/fileadmin/data/Congress/Minutes_2008.pdf.) In the August 2010 issue of USAPL's newsletter, Technical Committee Chair Robert Keller stated:

This year marked an [unsettling] trend with notable USAPL/IPF athletes and officials taking part in unsanctioned and non-drug-tested championships which are in direct competition with USA Powerlifting. As a result of this, I am sending out another reminder to both the athletes and officials that by participating in non-drug tested competitions, with potential suspended lifters taking part,* you're at risk of being sanctioned by the International Powerlifting Federation [IPF Constitution - 14.9]. Also, if you're selected to a USA Team and take part in another federation's international championship the same year, you will not be able to lift in a NAPF or IPF Championship that year as well. This rule extends to referees as well. All I can say is; buyer beware." (See page three at http://www.usapowerlifting.com/newsletter/2010/USAPL_Powerlines_August10.pdf.)

(*Rule 14.10.6 states: "An Athlete or official shall not participate in contests or competitions if there is any Athlete or official participating in any division, section or bodyweight class of that contest or competition who has been expelled or suspended from his or her international or national federation or who is serving the period of Ineligibility for a doping related offence.")

As a context for these remarks, the Raw Unity Meet began in 2008 and has increasingly attracted top USAPL lifters such as David Ricks, Mike Tuchscherer, Hennis Washington, Tony Reid, and Ellen Stein. The announcers for Raw Unity 2 and 3 were respectively the late Will Morris and Niko Hulslander, both from USAPL. IPF world champion Wade Hooper judged at Raw Unity 1. The scorekeepers for Raw Unity 3 were IPF referees Joseph and Cathy Marksteiner, Mr. Marksteiner also a member of the USAPL Executive Committee.

In November 2010, USAPL president Larry Maile sent a letter to USAPL lifters registered for Raw

Unity 4 in January 2011. The letter stated that the IPF had designated Raw Unity an international competition, and USAPL lifters who participated in Raw Unity could be suspended under Rule 14.9. Veteran IPF referee Allan Siegel has received threatening phone calls for his decision to judge at Raw Unity 4. (See <http://www.powerliftingwatch.com/node/17447>.)

In its Strategic Plan for 2008-2011, the IPF refers to athletes, coaches, and others as "customers," likewise speaking of "providing superior service to all stakeholders." (See pages eight and nine at http://www.powerlifting-ipf.com/fileadmin/data/IPF_Strategic_Plan.pdf.) It defines among its values "enjoyment," the need "to differentiate itself in the sporting marketplace," and "the IPF's fundamental strategic thrust...to differentiate itself as an organization of integrity."

The Strategic Plan also refers negatively to "the emergence of non-compliant Powerlifting groups." Whereas Raw Unity has received national media coverage via Fox Sports, the Strategic Plan describes "Spectator and media involvement limited" under its goals for "Market Prominence" (page twelve).

It is a peculiar form of customer service, enjoyment, and integrity that punishes and stigmatizes customers if they consume a competitor's product. Those who approach an endeavor as a marketplace do not behave in such a way. As will be examined in part two of this series, Raw Unity is not the first time the IPF has responded to competition with hostility.

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