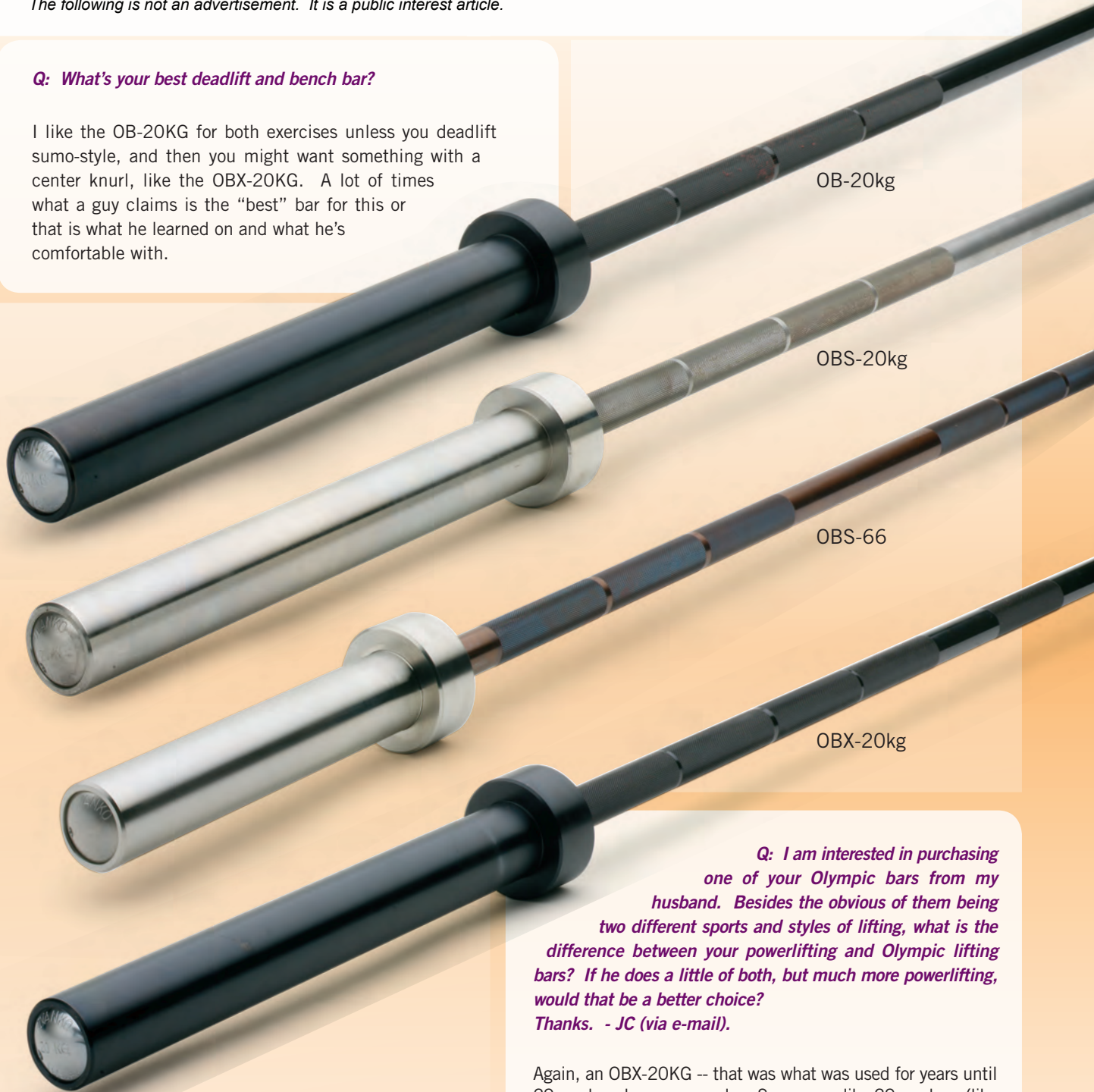


Ask Tom **IVANKO**[®], Part 2

The following is not an advertisement. It is a public interest article.

Q: What's your best deadlift and bench bar?

I like the OB-20KG for both exercises unless you deadlift sumo-style, and then you might want something with a center knurl, like the OBX-20KG. A lot of times what a guy claims is the "best" bar for this or that is what he learned on and what he's comfortable with.



Q: I am interested in purchasing one of your Olympic bars from my husband. Besides the obvious of them being two different sports and styles of lifting, what is the difference between your powerlifting and Olympic lifting bars? If he does a little of both, but much more powerlifting, would that be a better choice? Thanks. - JC (via e-mail).

Again, an OBX-20KG -- that was what was used for years until 29mm bars became popular. Some guys like 29mm bars (like our OBXS-20KG-29MM) because they haven't put anything time into practicing their lift off, and these days with wraps and all other kinds of restrictive gear, some guys are probably

lifting more weight than they can or should. In this case, a 29mm bar can help them. Moreover, a 28mm bar is usually less stiff than a 29mm bar, so this “whip” can help you deadlift and bench press.

When some guys do squats, they like the 29mm bar -- again, a generally stiffer bar-- because they don't practice the lift off and the bar bounces too much. But this is only relevant when you're talking about a lot of weight. And this only matters when you don't practice your lift off. And most people don't. But the best lifters make a set out of it: practicing taking the bar on and off the squat rack and perfecting how to balance a bar.

It's possible, by the way, to make a 28mm bar as stiff as the 29mm bars out there, but the chemical composition of the steel has to be different, and when you do it right, you find the bar is almost impossible to machine and knurl.

So I'd start with an OB-20KG, and use it for both sports. Your husband will be happy with it and he'll have it for a long time. Maybe, intime, if he got very, very strong, he might want to get a 29mm bar with a center knurl, but this would be overkill for most people.

Q: What's the low-down on the best knurling and how much difference does it make to the sport?

- MR, New Jersey.

Everyone has their own opinion about knurling. A lot of times their conclusions are derived from the type of bar they started using. But if you want an intelligent discussion of knurling you have to understand two things. And these are the only two things that determine an accurate discussion: 1) points-per-inch (p.p.i.) and 2) percentage of depth or, seen another way, “peak” of the knurl (i.e. 100% would be a full-point knurl).

Generally speaking, power lifters prefer a coarser knurl than Olympic lifters. But there are even exceptions to this as well. The American Powerlifting Federation (APF), in their rule book, was the only powerlifting organization that I'm aware of, that specified the number of points per inch they wanted on their bars. I thought this was interesting that they called out this specification. I thought it was a little extreme, but I like a coarse knurl myself.

Now they specified an amazing 12 points-per-inch: this is same about amount of points you'd find on a wood rasp! In fact, you could probably shape wood with this bar. However, with a knurl like that, you're certainly not going to slip. I guess this is another example of no pain, no gain.

For powerlifting, I prefer 20 p.p.i. with about an 90%-100% peak on the knurl. For Olympic lifting, I like 25 p.p.i. with about 75-85% peak. However, there is even some controversy here. Bud Charniga -- a great lifter who's been around for 30 or 40 years -- preferred a slightly coarser knurl because in his opinion you didn't have to squeeze the bar so hard, and you could concentrate on your technique. And technique is everything in Olympic lifting.

One thing about knurling to remember: you can never make the points or the peaks higher, but you can make them lower. There are two ways you can do this: by sanding the points off the knurl. And by painting the knurl with clear fingernail

polish (some people like to fill it up with chalk) thereby filling in the “valley” of point, which will effectively make the peak height lower.

Q: What are the substantive differences between a needle bearing bar and a bar with bushings. Is the needle bearing bar worth the extra cost?

- J.B, California.

In my opinion, roller or needle bearings are just a gimmick. To my knowledge, the first person to make a bearing bar was Andy Jackson of the Jackson Barbell Company back in the 1940's. A copy of the original blue prints are in the collection of the Ivanko Historical Society. Years later, when bearing bars were first used in International Competition, several lifters dislocated their shoulders.

What really made think about this was when I was displaying our stainless steel Olympic Bar with needle bearings (OBSNB) at the FIBO trade show in Germany, and a lot of old time Olympic lifters came up to me to tell me how much they disliked this sort of bar and wanted to be assured that they could still obtain bushing bars from Ivanko. In fact, one lifter, who was awarded a silver medal in the Olympics, thought needle bearing bars caused the plates to spin too much.

The lifters I've talked to have felt that a bushing bar gave just the correct amount of spin. When the bar was overhead, the plates didn't keep spinning. And if you think about it for a second, a bearing is supposed to be for high RPM (Revolutions Per Minute) applications and a bushing for lower RPM applications. Bushings with the correct fit and tolerance are the ideal. A bearing simply isn't the right thing for an Olympic bar. But a bushing is the perfect thing. You really only need to spin the bar for about one-half a turn so why would you want to put a needle bearing in a bar that doesn't ever get full (or fast) rotation?

Even if bearings did help you lift more, why is this a good thing? How many people who buy Olympic bars are competitive lifters vs. those who just want to improve their strength for their particular sport? A good bushing bar will probably outlast a bearing bar. The use of bearings is the use of technology for the sake of marketing hype. In all my years of collecting antique barbells and equipment, I've never seen a bushing bar wear out.

Remember this: No one ever got stronger by making the lift easier.

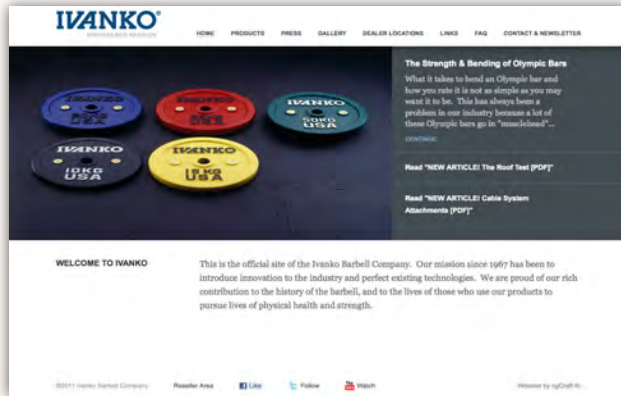
So why does Ivanko make a needle bearing bar? Did we fall for the hype ourselves? Are we proffering a gimmick? I think we make the best needle-bearing bar on the market. No one comes close to putting in the time to do it right like we do.

I was discussing this fact in general a while ago with an old friend of mine who was a long time Eleiko dealer. Sometimes you make concessions to the market. I'm pleased that we've made very few. But sometimes it's better to give people what they want than to try to educate them and make them smart.

Because you get the end of your life, worn out, and you realize all those people are still dumb. I think there's a Bob Dylan song in there somewhere.

Tommy Kono the greatest lifter ever, broke records with all kind of bars, bushings, and knurling. Great lifters make the lift. Not so great lifters blame the equipment.

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Ivanko Barbell Company was founded by Tom Lincir in 1967 and is the most respected manufacturer of professional and commercial grade barbell and dumbbell products worldwide. Your comments or questions are welcome. Contact Tom at tom@ivankobarbell.com or write to:

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