Written by CAROL POMEDAY
Wednesday, 02 November 2011 18:46

Competitive powerlifter Max Gasser can lift 518 pounds on a barbell, so hoisting a 200-pound calf on his family’s Belgium farm is no sweat.

Whether lifting a 200-pound calf or a 9-foot section of a telephone pole, Max Gasser, a 23-year-old Town of Belgium farmer and competitive powerlifter, does it with seeming ease.

Let’s just say that Gasser, at 5-feet 9-inches and 185 pounds of muscle, is not someone to pick a fight with — not that he’s the type to get into fights.

Photo by Sam Arendt

In May, Gasser won the Natural Athlete Strength Association power-lifting regional competition at the YMCA in Sheboygan.

Gasser dead-lifted 518 pounds, squat-lifted 450 pounds, bench pressed 320 pounds and curled

165 pounds to take top honors. Last year, he won his weight class.

Determined to win the top prize this year, Gasser bulked up for the competition and increased his workouts. His competition weight was 193 pounds this year compared to 178 pounds last year.

“In a way, I do like the attention and I like winning,” Gasser said. “But I do it mostly to build muscle and strength. I always liked it (watching powerlifters and bodybuilders) as a kid and thought, ‘That’s the way I want to look.’”

His girlfriend likes his muscles, Gasser said, “but she honestly could care less.”

Gasser works every day on the farm owned by his parents Dan and Lucy, then works out six to seven times a week at Anytime Fitness in Port Washington.

His typical day starts at 7:30 a.m. when he and his brother Luke milk 100 cows. Then he does field work, repairs equipment, feeds and milks cows and whatever else needs to be done until supper. At about 7:30 p.m. he heads to the fitness center to lift weights for 1-1/2 to two hours.

Gasser has been working out regularly since he was an eighth-grader at Cedar Grove-Belgium Middle School.

In high school, he was on the football and track teams, but was known more for his speed than his bulk.

After graduating in 2006, he worked for Oostburg Concrete for two years and continued working out regularly. He returned to work on the family farm two years ago when his mother injured her back in a farm accident.

It didn’t take Gasser long to decide to stay on the farm, joining his parents and Luke. Their brother, Jed, a senior at Cedar Grove-Belgium High School, also plans to join the family business.

Gasser enjoys working with the animals and doing field work, but mostly he likes being with his family.

“You’re basically self-employed, and I’m with my family,” Gasser said. “Everything you do, all the work, you see progress that’s helping out your farm.

“I like having the variety of work. You’re not just milking or just doing work in the field. There are many different skills involved. Me and my brother work together all day. My parents are still the bosses.”

With all the crops, except cob corn, harvested, the Gassers are working on an adjacent farm the parents recently purchased to expand the operation to accommodate the three boys.

Luke and his wife Emilie will live on that farm. The barn is being remodeled for young stock.

When Gasser talks about his family, he includes his stepsiblings and two nephews.

He is part of a blended family of six children — Dan’s son Shane, Lucy’s children Jacob and Emily and the couple’s three sons Max, Luke and Jed. The siblings get along well and live within 10 miles of the family farm, which is the gathering place for activities.

Although only the three youngest sons are, or plan to, work full-time on the farm, everyone chips in during planting and harvesting, their mother Lucy said.

“When we recently added onto our house, people asked why now with the boys leaving home. Dan told them, ‘Because our kids don’t want to leave,’” she said. “They spend so much time together on the farm, and they’re very, very close.”

Working on his farm is more fun than the concrete business, which was harder physically, Gasser said, especially now that hay is harvested into large round bales.

“It used to be a lot harder when you had to throw down hay bales,” Gasser said. “Now, we don’t have to do as much heavy work. It’s a lot of tractor work. We still have to pick up field stones.

The telephone poles Gasser was called upon to move are being used for fence posts on the second farm.

“Whenever they want something heavy lifted, it’s ‘Max, you’re the one who works out, so you do it,’” Gasser said.