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MEDIA RELEASE

Champion finds literature uplifting

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Simon Fraser University first-year student Derek Herridge is as comfortable sitting back with a great literary work as he is hoisting 120 kilograms over his head.

The [SFU Surrey](#) world literature student recently netted a gold medal in his 94 kg weight category at the Junior Canadian Weightlifting Championships.

Herridge had a 270 kg combined lift - 125 kg in the snatch and a clean-and-jerk of 145 kg - that was an impressive 20 kilograms heavier than the second place score.

"I started lifting weights in high school and realized that I not only liked it, but could do well," says Herridge, who continues to train at Semiahmoo Secondary in South Surrey.

His championship medal is a first after six years in the sport. His sights are now set on making the U21 national team and training to qualify for the [2014 Commonwealth Games](#) in Glasgow, Scotland.

Herridge's involvement in the sport even piqued the interest of his mother, a school teacher, who took it up and became a Canadian masters champion.

They also share a love of reading - and that's what has steered Herridge's academic direction. "I've always loved literature. Books were always in my world," he says.

"I love to read and I love to listen to others read," Herridge adds, with favorite works including *The Barefoot Gen*, *The Unbelievable Lightness of Being*, *The Divine Comedy*, and epics like *Dante's Inferno* and *The Odyssey*.

It's not exactly gym reading material. And while athlete students often lean towards fields like sports therapy, Herridge does not apologize that he is not a science guy.

"I'm taking world literature because I like it, it's that simple," says Herridge, who sports a high-B GPA after his first semester, and whose social network is largely English and arts program pals. "Writing can be really intense. But it's the reading that helps. In class, that's my strength."

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