

'HOW I
BUILD MY
BODY'

KARENJEET KAUR BAINS



MEET THE ELITE

Karenjeet Kaur Bains is the first female Sikh powerlifter to represent Great Britain. She became Commonwealth Champion in the under 63kg category in 2019, winning three gold medals and two silver medals, and has placed in the top 10 in the World and European Powerlifting Championships. She recently came 6th in the World Bench Press Championships.

STRENGTH

'I have a full-time job as a chartered accountant, so I train five or six times a week after work, doing one 90-minute to two-hour session a day. Powerlifting is a form of weightlifting where you perform three disciplines: the squat, bench press, and deadlift. Right now, I'm preparing for a bench press competition, so I've upped my bench press sessions to three a week and I'm doing less lower-body work. When I train, I perform the three key moves as well as accessory exercises to strengthen individual body parts, like my shoulders or triceps. Mondays are like an active rest day with a light bench press session, and I'll work on my deadlifts on Tuesdays, also performing accessory moves like lat pulldowns, pull-ups and chin-ups. Wednesdays involve a mid-range bench press session, then I give my upper-body a rest on Thursdays with a squat session. After a rest day on Friday, I'll do a heavier bench press session on Saturday, doing maybe one rep at 90 per cent of my max strength, or practising competition pauses (pausing before being allowed to drive the bench press up). Sunday will be a squat or deadlift day depending on what I've done in the week.'

CARDIO

'I compete in weight classes (I've recently gone

from the under 63kg class to the under 69kg class), which means I have to make weight, otherwise I can't compete. I do up my cardio to help me cut weight when I need to, but I also like to do it regularly for the heart and lung benefits. I have an athletics background and I was a sprinter until the age of 17, so I enjoy doing circuit training on my active rest days with moves like skipping, burpees and tuck jumps.'

NUTRITION

'Good nutrition is essential for fuelling my workouts, but I don't track my macros or anything like that. I eat healthily five or six days a week, and then I'll have a treat day at the weekend – I'm not going to say no to my mum's delicious Punjabi food if she's cooking! You only live once, so it's good to enjoy food. That said, if I need to cut weight for a competition, I will follow a stricter diet. I generally eat three meals a day with healthy snacks in between. For me, it's all about eating plenty of protein from meat, eggs, chicken and fish, and getting in enough carbs with pasta, rice and lots of veg. After a workout, I tend to have a protein shake and take a creatine supplement, which is naturally found in the body and aids recovery.'

RECOVERY

'I try to sleep for seven to eight hours each night, so my muscles get the good



rest they need to repair themselves. I also do a lot of stretching and foam rolling, and I'll sometimes get a sports massage to relax my muscles. I always go for a lunchtime walk to get my legs moving, help reduce any built-up soreness, and clear my head. Mental recovery is also very important to me, so I pray and meditate to calm the mind, especially before bed.'

VITAL KIT

'To protect my back, I wear the SBD 13mm Lever Belt (£179.99; sbdapparel.com), and

I wear knee sleeves to support my knee joints. When I'm squatting, I like to wear shoes with a slight heel, such as the Adidas Powerlift Weightlifting Shoes (£85; adidas.co.uk), as they provide more elevation to help me achieve a deeper squat. However, I prefer to wear flat wrestling shoes when deadlifting so I'm close to the ground. I also use wrist wraps to reduce pressure placed on my wrists. 🏋️‍♀️

Bains is an ambassador for Brawn, a community app for strength athletes created to bring together and connect anyone interested in strength training across the globe. Visit brawn.co.uk to find out more.

'My greatest achievement...'

'Winning my first international title at the Commonwealth Championships was very special to me because I had to go through a really tough journey to get there. At 19, I sustained a very painful injury to my left piriformis muscle (found in the glutes) which lasted for two years – I couldn't even lift an empty barbell without crying. At the same time, I lost a close friend and was struggling with my ACA [Associate Chartered Accountant] exams so, coupled with my injury, it was very tough physically and mentally. There was a time when I thought I'd never lift again, but I refused to give up. Coming through all that made my win all the more sweeter.'

Words: Joanna Ebsworth | Photography: White Lights Media