

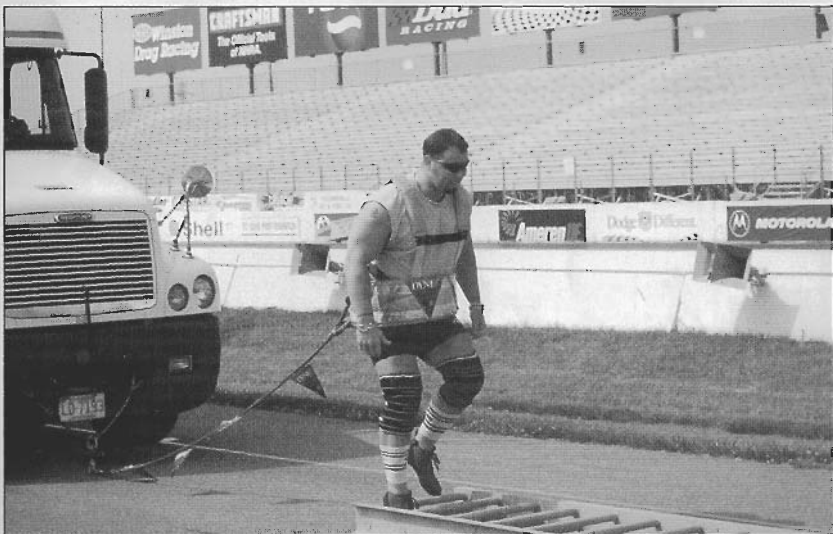
Using "Norsepower" to Demonstrate MRTI Rolling Resistance

by Kevin Rohlwing

There are only a handful of people who immediately recognize the name Magnús Ver Magnusson, and very few of them are associated with the tire retreading industry. His accomplishments mean nothing to the average person, but he is definitely considered the king of his arena.

Whenever I'm channel surfing, my thumb always seems to rest on a sporting event. I don't care how ridiculous the competition may seem, any sport is a sport worth watching for at least a few minutes. A few years ago, I ended up giving the remote a break because the World's Strongest Man was about to be crowned.

I thought the competitors would probably bench press, squat and dead lift standard barbells. While I can't remember every event, there are several that come to mind. One of my personal favorites is directly related to the tire industry. It involved a simple race with OTR tires. My back still hurts from watching the athletes flip a 26.5R25 tire end-over-end for about 20 yards. I don't think I could flip it once and these guys are racing for time! I was hooked.



Magnús prepares to pull a 60,000 lb tractor and trailer in a test to demonstrate the rolling resistance of retreaded tires. A ladder bolted to the track provided Magnús with traction to get the truck moving.

The World's Strongest Man competition uses items and contests that every viewer can relate to. I've watched these guys toss around boulders, anchors, barrels and logs. Other common events include car flipping and the always-popular truck pull. No matter how you look at it, these athletes possess incredible strength and coordination.

But what does this have to do with retreading? Michelin Retread Technologies, Inc. (MRTI) and Brahler's Truckers Supply recently teamed up to present a demonstration on the advantages of reduced rolling resistance. Instead of using proven (and boring) scientific methods, they turned to Magnús to supply the "Norsepower" and, in the process, created an event that people are still talking about.

The MRTI Midwest Technical Fair, Demo and Truck Show was held July 25 at the Gateway International Raceway in Madison, Illinois. More than 50 companies and organizations (including ITRA) exhibited products and services for the transportation and tire industries. Fleets and tire dealers throughout the St. Louis area were invited to attend and companies sent more than 100 representatives.



The spectacle of Magnús drew a large crowd in addition to local television and radio. Brahler's offered ITRA a personal invitation to exhibit, and this particular lady was very grateful for the complimentary sun visor.





Once Magnús traveled beyond the last rung of the ladder, the momentum of the vehicle and rolling resistance of the retreads took over.

While I seriously doubt anyone makes a retread purchasing decision based solely on the fact that the 4-time World's Strongest Man winner pulled the Michelin retreads farther than the competition, the demonstration was powerful. The mere presence of Magnús attracted local television, and a sports radio station held a live broadcast from the track. Science had nothing to do with it.

Michelin made every effort to ensure the test was fair. Since Magnús pulled the competition first, you could say the Michelin retreads were at a disadvantage because he was tired. On the other hand, you could say he was warmed up. Regardless, the engineers made a genuine attempt to preserve the scientific merit of the test and that shouldn't go unnoticed (see "How the Test Was Conducted" on page 8).

As the host dealer, Brahler's made sure their best customers had an opportunity to pose with Magnús following the demonstration. Several people brought their families and the children smiled from ear to ear when he lifted them up for the photo. When you make a customer feel special, they definitely feel better about making purchases. Brahler's employees were easy to find and every one of them made an effort to thank people for attending. Their hospitality and professionalism made an excellent impression.



Richard Brahler was the driving force behind bringing Magnús to the St. Louis area.

The 4-hour drive from St. Louis to Louisville gave me a chance to gather my thoughts and really think about what I saw. MRTI and Brahler's tried something different to generate excitement and expose current and potential customers to the benefits of Michelin retreads. Once again, I doubt the science behind the demonstration had much of an impact on the fleets in attendance because there were too many human variables. But I'm positive they won't completely dismiss the results, and they will definitely remember seeing Magnús pull a 60,000 lb tractor and trailer over 29 feet. That image combined with the presence of MRTI and Brahler's defines the concept of thinking outside the box. Sometimes you have to take chances to make your point. Message received. ■

As the two primary sponsors, MRTI and Brahler's Truckers Supply were well represented.

