

Charity's weighty challenge

Strongman Conor Kelly will drag a bus across Yonge-Dundas Square to feed hungry students

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Only once during the training session did the 360-kilogram tire threaten to break free.

"Tire is moving," said Conor Kelly, bracing himself to prevent the enormous piece of black rubber from rolling in the direction of the *Toronto Star's* audio-visual equipment. "Tire is on the move."

Kelly, owner of Evolution Fitness, was using the giant tire to demonstrate how he trains to perform his feats of strength.

He flipped the tire end over end, then lifted a massive concrete ball and pulled a weighted sled.

There was a purpose behind this unusually aggressive workout.

Saturday at 2 p.m., Kelly will pull a 12,270-kilogram school bus across Yonge-Dundas Square for charity.

Funds raised will benefit the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, the official charity of the Toronto District School Board.

If it is deemed safe, a group of adults might be asked to hop on board to increase the weight to 17,000 kilograms.

Kelly, 31, started training for the bus pull about eight weeks ago. Since then, he has lifted weights several days a week and trained with the strength objects at least once a week.

Flipping tires is "a classic strongman move," he said.

The sled he uses for training is a flat piece of metal chained to a custom harness and loaded with more than 500 kilograms. The Atlas stone is a specially poured concrete ball weighing about 90 kilograms. Kelly squats to lift it, rolls it up his torso to shoulder level, then rolls it back down.

To maintain a weight of 190 pounds on his 5-foot-6 frame, Kelly



Conor Kelly practises on a 360-kilogram tire before Saturday's bus pull in aid of Student Success foundation. CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO STAR

eats about 5,000 calories a day. That means six meals a day, made up mostly of rice or grains, eggs, chicken, fish and loads of vegetables and fruit.

"It is probably a couple hundred dollars more a month than I would usually spend," Kelly said.

He started lifting weights at 16. In his 20s he spent six years competing in various strongman competitions and was a four-time finalist for Ontario's Strongest Man.

During his stint as a strongman he once pulled a transport truck and fire truck weighing more than 17,000 kilograms. "Every pull is its own unique challenge," Kelly said. "The last time I did any kind of vehi-

Training video

Conor Kelly explains how he trains for pulling a 2,270-kilogram bus at thestar.com/videozone

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cle pull I weighed about 40 pounds more than I did today."

When he retired about four years ago, the extreme exercise had taken a toll.

"You are pretty much in pain all of the time. There is so much strain on the body." He managed to avoid devastating injuries, but when lifting extremely heavy objects, even a

small shift in balance can result in torn muscle.

He prepares with a 30-minute warm-up session and his training in the gym focuses on balanced muscle development. "You need to have proper coaching."

Being focused and stubborn also contributes to his success, a message he hopes to pass on to children living in poverty.

"By a 190-pound man being able to pull a (12,270 kilogram) bus I am showing that a lot can be achieved with very little," he said. "If you are willing to do what it takes."

For more information, go to www.pullingforthehungry.com or www.studentsuccess.ca.