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Schwarzenegger gives Sawyer a lift

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- One small weightlifting failure led to a lifetime moment with Arnold Schwarzenegger for Mattoon's Jenny Sawyer.

The 13-year-old girl who has been ranked No. 1 in the country and a member of U.S. national teams had just missed a clean-and-jerk in the Arnold Weightlifting Classic and was near tears when she almost bumped into the man for whom the competition was named.

Schwarzenegger, the bodybuilder and now California governor, asked what was wrong and Sawyer answered that she had missed a lift.

"Arnold spent several minutes talking to her," Charleston Parks and Recreation Weightlifting Club coach Marty Schnorf said. "Arnold told her, 'A lot of things will go wrong in life. Keep working at it.'"

While Schwarzenegger was talking to her, hundreds of people watched and took pictures of the two of them.

Sawyer then proceeded back to the platform and made a slightly lower weight with the world famous man standing within a few feet cheering her.

She wound up the winner of her 135-pound bodyweight class in the 13-year-old age division and was named the third best age 20-and-under lifter in the meet, male or female.

Schwarzenegger then spoke to the whole crowd and said, "When I was young, you could not body build alone. So, I started out Olympic lifting. Olympic lifting and free weights are much better for athletes than machines."

Then, looking over at Jenny Sawyer standing a few feet from him, Schwarzenegger said: "I did not start weightlifting at 13 like Jenny is now. I was 16 when I started."

Schwarzenegger was accompanied to the event by members of his family, California police, members of his staff, Columbus police and security, many newspaper reporters, and bomb sniffing dogs.

"It was a great meet and a great experience for the kids," Schnorf said. "For Arnold to spend that much time with Jenny, to have hundreds of people taking your picture, dozens of reporters asking you your full name, to have Arnold personally cheer you on as you lifted, and for him to refer to Jenny by name was a once in a lifetime experience. Except most of us will never have that experience. We were very impressed that Arnold would take so much time talking with her. We did not know that it would make newspapers all across the country."

She was one of nine weightlifters from the Charleston Parks and Recreation Department Weightlifting Club participating in the multi-sport event that featured more than 100,000 people in attendance.

In addition to Sawyer's first place, Charleston had Kierstyn Davis and Kari Davis place second and Krystelle Lim and Brittany Brown place third.

"Nathan (Sewell), Colton (Sewell) and Ryan (Decker) all lifted in the lightest weight class (123 pounds)," Schnorf said. "They were way under that weight, so were not able to place in the

top three in this meet. They all lifted well. Ryan is a veteran. Ross (Kitchen) was third in his class. Nathan, Colton, and Ross are beginners."

"Krystelle (Lim) finished third in her class, and Kierstyn (Davis) finished second, and Jenny was first. All were in the same class. Brittany was third in her class, and Kari was second in her class."

Brown won an award for her outstanding lift and effort in the snatch, Kitchen won an award for the best clean-and-jerk in relationship to his snatch.

The lifters are not going to rest on their laurels. Kari Davis, Jenny Sawyer, and Mitchell Sawyer are to travel to Orlando, Fla. for the National Junior. (ages 20 and under) Championships this weekend. This is the same meet to which Charleston played host in 2003. It is open to the best 20 and under lifters who have made the high qualifying totals.

"Jenny and Kari are shooting to go to the Olympic Training Center for an all expense paid trip this summer," said Schnorf. "I also expect Jenny and Kari to represent the United States in international competition this summer, again all expenses paid. Mitchell has a chance to make an international team which will compete in Colombia later this year."

"If Jenny shows and signs of being upset with herself in Florida, Schnorf said he has the solution now.

"I am just going to pick up the cell phone and tell her 'Don't make me call Arnold to give you another pep talk,' " Schnorf said. "I might even stretch the truth a little and tell Jenny that Arnold told me that if she started up again, I should tell that her that Arnold said, 'I'll be back.' "

The Charleston Parks and Recreation Department Weightlifting Club is open to everyone with no charge.

"While I cannot promise everyone will get to meet Arnold or travel all over the country and compete internationally, you never know where the next Curt White (former Olympian weightlifter from Charleston) or Stewart Thornburgh (5 times world team member) might be," Schnorf said.

For more information on the club, contact the recreation department or e-mail charlestonweightliftingclub@yahoo.com

Charleston lifters

Nathan Sewell, age 7, weighing 55 pounds, snatched 20 pounds; clean-and-jerked 33.

Colton Sewell, age 10, weight 90 pounds, snatch 44 and clean-and-jerk 55

Ryan Decker, age 11, weight 80 pounds, snatch 77 and clean-and-jerk 110

Ross Kitchen, age 12, weight 130 pounds, snatch 50 and clean-and-jerk 81

Krystell Lim, age 17, weight 135 pounds, snatch 81 and clean-and-jerk 112

Kierstyn Davis, age 12, weight 130 pounds, snatch 100 and clean-and-jerk 127

Jenny Sawyer, age 13, weight 135 pounds, snatch 150 and clean-and-jerk 180

Brittany Brown, age 22, weight 150 pounds, snatch 135 and clean-and-jerk 180

Kari Davis, age 13, heavy weight class, snatch 137 and clean-and-jerk 172