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Local lifters bulk up on championships

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Age division Best Lifter Jenny Sawyer and top-nationally ranked Kari Davis were among the Charleston Parks and Recreation Department Weightlifting Clubs four national champions last weekend.

Colton Sewell and Ryan Decker also won championships at the National Schoolage Weightlifting meet for ages 17-and-under.

Nathan Sewell was second and Kierstyn Davis third so all of the lifters from the local club won medals.

In addition, of the 6 age division team titles, the local club won two of them.

Sawyer won the 'Best Lifter' award for the 14-15 girls' age division.

Kari Davis now ranks No. 1 on the United States Team which is to compete in the 14- and 15-year-old Pan American Championships in August in Campeche, Mexico.

Sawyer ranks # 2 on that team, so the local club has two of the four members of the girls' team.

Sewell, age 9, of Westfield, was the first lifter for the club in the meet.

Despite being the youngest and lightest boy in the whole meet, he was 2nd in his class and narrowly missed winning. Nathan snatched 55 pounds and clean and jerked 77 pounds while weighing less than 66. He finished 2nd to James Swords of Houston, Texas, in the 13-and-under 77 pound class. Swords was forced to make his last lift to beat Nathan by 4 pounds.

Colton Sewell, age 11, made a clutch third attempt clean-and-jerk to win the 13-and-under 110-pound class. Colton, also of Westfield, made 90 pounds in the snatch and 129 in the clean-and-jerk. He narrowly defeated a lifter from Shreveport, La., by virtue of making his last clean-and-jerk and tying him and being the lighter lifter. When lifters tie, the lighter lifter wins. So, Colton won by way of being a half-pound lighter.

Ryan Decker, 13, of Mattoon, was the other local lifter in the first session. Ryan won by a margin of 15 pounds, and, like Nathan, made all 6 of his lifts. Decker, weighing 94 pounds snatched 92 and clean-and-jerked 124 pounds. Ryan's total would have actually won the next heavier class, which was won by teammate Colton Sewell. Both of the Sewells will be in the same age division next year, while Decker will move up to the 14 & 15 division. Teams are made up of a maximum of 4 boys and 3 girls. Nathan & Colton Sewell, along with Ryan Decker, combined to win the 13 and under boys' team title, for the Charleston Parks and Rec. Dept club, winning 2 1sts and a 2nd.

In the girls' division, Sawyer, 15, of Mattoon, won her fifth straight National Schoolage Championship, this time in the 139-pound class for ages 14-15. Jenny won by over 60 pounds, snatching 158 pounds and clean-and-jerking 198 pounds. On her third clean-and-jerk attempt, Sawyer attempted a new National Schoolage record of 215+ pounds, which she missed. She was the only girl in the meet to even attempt a national record. Using a formula which compares lifters of different weights, Sawyer was named the 'Best Lifter' in her age division of all classes.

Teammate Kierstyn Davis, age 13, of Westfield was 3rd in the 14 & 15 139 pounds class. She is considered a 14-year-old because she turns 14 later this year. Kierstyn snatched 117 pounds and clean-and-jerked 145 pounds in finishing third. She will still be in the same age division next year.

Kari Davis, age 15, of Westfield, won her 2nd straight Schoolage Championship, adding it to the one she won last year in Detroit. She also won the National Jr. Championships for girls 20 and under in March in Chicago.

Davis, who had been a little sick, made 165 pounds in the snatch and made 220 pounds in the clean-and-jerk. No girl in the 16-17 age division totaled more or clean-and-jerked more than she did. Davis lifted in the over 165 pounds class.

Besides clinching a spot on the Pan American 14 & 15 team competing in Mexico, Jenny Sawyer and Kari Davis both cemented their spots for the Rudy Sablo 2012 Olympic Development Weightlifting Camp, an all expense paid training camp later this year at the United States Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Co. The trip to Mexico and the trip to Colorado will be funded by USA Weightlifting and the United States Olympic Committee.

'Overall, this was one of the finest performances our club has ever had," said club coach Marty Schnorf. "No one lifted any better than Nathan Sewell did. Colton made a clutch clean-and-jerk to win, and Ryan looked very solid and could have done more and won with some to spare. The boys really set the tone on the first day with their great lifting. As a group, they made 17 of 18 lifts.'

"Jenny Sawyer probably had the best meet of her life," Schnorf said. "She and Kari Davis both lifted below their best in May in Chicago, especially Jenny. I was not happy then. Jenny upped her total by 28 pounds and Kari upped her total by 13 pounds despite not feeling well. Kari's last clean-and-jerk with 220 was awesome. Kierstyn was slightly below her best, and I had hoped for a little more out of her. But overall, it was a tremendous performance. I was proud of all of them.'

The local club easily won the 14-15 girls' class for the second straight year. The club had two firsts and one 3rd to defend the title they won in Detroit last year.

Sawyer now ranks about sixth among all girls ages 20-and-under among all weight classes, while Davis is about 10th.

If the United States sends a full seven-person team to the Junior World Weightlifting Championships next year in White Horse, Yukon Territory, Canada, Sawyer and Davis both have at least a shot to make the team. It is believed that no female from Coles County has ever competed in a world championship in any sport.

Nathan & Colton Sewell and Ryan Decker all said that it was thrill to win their first national championships. 'We are looking forward to next year's meet,' they agreed. Next year's National Schoolage WL Championships to be held at Disney World in Orlando, Fla. next June.

The local club is open to everyone without charge. Anyone interested can contact the Rec. Dept. or e-mail charlestonweightliftingclub@yahoo.com. Or, go to their website at charlestonweightliftingclub.com