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Westfield's Davis earns youngest national champ honors

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MERRILVILLE, Ind. -- Two days before her 15th birthday, Westfield's Kari Davis, age 14, won the National Junior Weightlifting Championships for ages 20 and under.

Representing the Charleston Parks and Recreation Department Weightlifting Club, Davis was the youngest lifter in her class and three years younger than any other national champion in the other 14 weight classes. She is the daughter of Mark and Karen Davis of Westfield, Illinois, and has been lifting for about 1 1/2 years.

Lifting in the over 75-kilograms, or 165 pounds, category, Davis made lifts of 163 pound in the snatch and 206 pounds in the clean and jerk. On her final attempt, Kari missed 216 pounds after she had already clinched first place.



Submitted photo (JG/T-C)

Kari Davis (above) successfully completes a lift.

The competition was very close with second place being only one kilogram behind Davis. Other top competitors in her class were from Kansas, New Jersey, Colorado, and Georgia among other states.

"Kari is defending National Schoolage Champion in the 14 & 15 age group, which she won last year in Detroit," Charleston Parks and Recreation Department Weightlifting Club coach Marty Schnorf said. "This title is much bigger, as she had to beat lifters age 20 and under, some of whom were in college. This was a big accomplishment. I expected her to finish around third. Every lift was critical as there was some very close competition."

"Kari shows up every workout, works hard, behaves like she should, and is a credit to our program. I was very proud of her. This was a big, big win for her and for our club."

Besides Kari, two other lifters from the local club competed in the meet which required high qualifying totals.

Mattoon's Jenny Sawyer finished sixth in the very tough 137-pound class. The 14-year-old Sawyer made lifts of 141 pounds in the snatch and 178 in the clean and jerk. Her class had at least seven lifters who had competed in international competition.

Also in the same class, Kari's sister Kierstyn Davis placed 11th. She was the youngest lifter in the whole meet, having turned 13 this past December. She made lifts of 117 pounds in the snatch and

a personal best 150 in the clean and jerk. The clean and jerk was a personal record for her.

"Overall, I was very, very pleased with the results of our lifters," Schnorf said. "WE had the youngest lifter in the met and three of the six or seven youngest. All competed well and equaled or improved their recent totals."

Kari Davis and Jenny Sawyer both have qualified for the Senior National Championships in the Chicago area the second weekend in May. This meet is the number one meet in the U.S. and has the highest qualifying totals and is open to lifters of all ages. It is unlikely that there will be any lifters any younger than Kari and Jenny at the Senior Nationals.

The next major competition for the local lifters is the National Schoolage Weightlifting Championships (for ages 17-and-under) to be held in Springfield, Mo., in late June. Both Kari and Kierstyn Davis are defending national champions in their age groups

Jenny Sawyer has won the national championship in her age group four years in Vermont, New Jersey, Indiana and Detroit.

This meet was also the secondary qualifier for the Pan American 13 -15 year old WL Championships to be held in Rampeche, Mexico, in mid-August. Kari Davis is defending champion in her class.

This meet also was a qualifier for the USA Weightlifting training camp to be held at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to be held this summer or over Christmas break. The trip to Mexico and the Olympic Training Center is to be completely funded by USA Weightlifting and the United States Olympic Committee.

The final and primary qualifier for the international competition and for the training camp will be at the Schoolage Championships in Springfield, Mo. Right now, the U.S. is set to send four girls to the international competition in Mexico. Kari Davis is the No. 1 ranked girl on the team, and Jenny Sawyer is ranked No. 3. Sawyer has competed internationally twice before in Canada, while Kari has competed internationally once.

"I know all of the lifters pretty well, and I have coached all four of the top ranked girls in international competition," Schnorf said. "It is extremely unlikely that Kari will be bumped out of her No. 1 slot on the team. Jenny is No. 3, and she is coming back and improving, and she has a shot to move up to No. 2. I would say Kari's chances of making the team are better than 99 percent, while Jenny's chances are about 99 percent. All they have to do is enter the meet in Missouri and show up and be available to be drug tested. All USA Weightlifting National competitions have drug testing. Their totals carry over, and should stand them in good stead. They really don't even have to lift to make the team."