

Raising the bar

Written by Vinny Benedetto
Friday, 15 August 2014 15:42 -



Jordan Baker finds her niche in AAU powerlifting

It has been roughly a year since Jordan Baker entered her first powerlifting competition.

Less than a month has passed since she became an AAU world record holder.

She got started in the weight room three years ago as a freshman at Cross County before returning to Gothenburg this summer for her senior year. Her original intention was to combat back pain caused by scoliosis, which limited her in track and softball.

As the pain subsided, Baker continued lifting. She found it to be an enjoyable way of keeping fit. She also discovered that she was able to lift more than most other girls.

Eventually, her former trainer, Jordan Johnson, offered to take her to a competition if she would enter. Baker agreed, and one early morning the two set out from Stromsburg and traveled to Lexington for her first competition.

Powerlifting competitions consist of three lifts: bench press, deadlift and squat. Each lifter gets three attempts for each exercise. The highest completed weight from each lift is added together to determine the total weight lifted. The total is then divided by the lifter's weight class to determine who lifted the most pound-for-pound.

While it sounds intense, Baker describes it as a little more low key.

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“It’s an easygoing sport,” she said. “It’s fun.”

Baker finished second in a field of more than 80 entrants in Lexington. Her second meet turned out to be her first win.

At an April event in Orchard, she placed second to Lexington’s Sandra Gomez for the second time. She hasn’t lost since.

Sometimes taking home first place is easier than she would like. After the entrants are divided into classes based on age and weight, there may be only one or two opponents for Baker to compete against.

When there are not many people to beat, Baker chases something else.

“That (having few competitors) is frustrating, so normally I just go for records,” Baker said. “As cocky as that kind of sounded, but that’s just how it works sometimes. You have to shoot for something when you’re competing.”

After taking home a gold medal from the Cornhusker State Games in July, it was on to Des Moines for the AAU Junior Olympic Games. Baker was the only entrant in her age and weight division, so she went after the record book.

Baker squatted 230 pounds on her second attempt, which was less than a pound away from the world record. On her next attempt, she broke the record with a successful squat of 235 pounds.

Since she set a record, Baker was awarded a fourth try. She jumped up to 237 and completed it with ease.

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“I was ecstatic. I was happy,” said Baker. “I was jumping up and down. I was like ‘Let’s go. I can do another one.’ ”

She has already set her sights on a new record. With the help of her new trainer at the Gothenburg Memorial Hospital Wellness Center, Baker hopes to break her own record with a squat between 240 and 250 pounds.

That will have to wait for a few months, as Baker doesn’t plan to compete again until November to give her body time to recover. When she returns to her routine of 2-hour workouts six days a week, she hopes to diversify her records.

“I want to break the bench record, which is 137 pounds” she said. “I’m at like 130 now.”

In the next year, Baker will continue to use her strength. She plans to enroll in a collegiate program that will help her become a personal trainer or join a branch of the military.

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