Weight Lifting Grows
As Sport At Va. Tech

BLACKSBURG—Years of training, months of practice, and daily grinding workouts are part of one of the lesser known sports—weight-lifting. But when the goal is reached, lifting overhead a bar with heavy metal discs on the ends, it all becomes worthwhile.

So said Jeff W. Johnson, a senior accounting major from Fairfax, who at 165 pounds, is the top lifter at Tech and Olympic prospect. Johnson explained how he got into the sport of weight-lifting and some of its trials and tribulations.

“A friend of mine got me interested,” Johnson said, “and it kind of came naturally to me. He took me to some tournaments and introduced me to some of the top weight-lifters, and I was really impressed.”

“I guess it’s something you really have to want to do,” he added, “and the only thing that can keep you interested is constant improvement and competition.”

Like most other sports, the only way to improve in weightlifting is to practice and stay in good physical condition. To do this, a sound training program is necessary.

“I work out with the weights four days a week for about two and one half hours. The other three days are spent running. The better cardiovascular shape you’re in, the less chance of injury,” Johnson said.

The week before a meet, the workout is cut down in poundage. The day of the meet consists of stretching exercises and a workout using competitive poundage. “The meet is easy compared to the workout,” he said.

“The main thing is to peak your training toward the meets.”

Once a meet begins, it’s just a matter of getting the adrenalin flowing and then psyching oneself up enough to make the lift, Johnson said.

“Attaining a psyche” is focusing all your attention on a central point, picturing the lift in the mind, and staying relaxed,” he explained.

The lift is then done just as in practice, quickly and balanced.

Contrary to most other sports, in weightlifting you compete against the weights, not the opponents. The competition may determine only the amount of poundage you are required to lift, Johnson noted.

Lifting all those heavy weights appears quite hazardous, but for those who know what they are doing, serious injuries are not common. The most common injuries are just plain sore muscles. Some wrist and knee problems, however, can occur, so wraps for wrists and knees are allowed in competition for support and warmth.

When the ultimate goal is the Olympics, all the little aches and pains and inconveniences that come with training for any sport, become worth it. For Johnson and some other team members, that goal is not too unrealistic.