Gobblers May Have Olympic Grappler

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Years of training, months of practice, and daily grinding workouts are all involved in one of Virginia Tech’s lesser known sports — weightlifting. But when the bar with heavy metal discs on the ends is lifted, it all becomes worthwhile.

So said Jeff Johnson, a senior accounting major from Fairfax, who at 165 pounds, is Tech’s top lifter and Olympic prospect. Johnson explained how he got into the sport of weightlifting 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 weightlifters, 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 explained.

The week before a meet, the workout is cutdown 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 involves 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 only determine the amount of poundage you are required to lift, Johnson noted.

Lifting all those heavy weights appears hazardous, but serious injuries are not common for those who know their specialty.