

Van Driel muscles past opponents

Beausejour provincial record-setting powerlifter off to Western Canadians

By Tony Zerucha

Even though she's only been a competitive powerlifter for a few months, it's safe to say Beausejour's Laine Van Driel is getting a lift out of the sport.

A Grade 12 student at École Edward Schreyer School, Van Driel has qualified for the Canadian Powerlifting Union's Western Canadian Championships, scheduled for March 7-10 in Moose Jaw, Sask.

While she's worked out for three years, Van Driel started powerlifting in July 2023 after being introduced to it by her boyfriend. She trains at Winnipeg's Kormerstone Barbell and Beausejour's Fuel Fitness and Nutrition.

"I love lifting," Van Driel said. "I love testing how far I can push my body and how strong I can get."

Like all successful athletes, Van Driel has tremendous focus. In addition to training, she works two jobs and graduates high school in June.

"Lifting to this extreme is a lifestyle," Van Driel said. "I don't party, don't drink, follow a strict meal plan of mainly beef and rice and a strict workout plan. I spend around two hours a day in the gym training."

After three months of training, Van Driel entered her first competition this past October. She said she wanted to compete before she turned 18, and the goal gave her a time line.

Competing in the 57 kg weight class, she broke four provincial records, placing first in her age and

weight class. Her performance qualified her for the provincial and western Canadian meets. Van Driel squatted 82.5 kg (182 lbs), bench pressed 57 kg (127 lbs) and deadlifted 95 kg (210 lbs). Those were records, as was the total weight of her top lifts combined.

"I was so nervous but confident in my lifts," Van Driel admitted. "My goal was to break the current records, which I did. I knew I wouldn't need to push myself to the max, which was good because failing a lift at my first competition would've destroyed my confidence."

Further pushing herself, Van Driel has competed in higher weight classes. She also faces a compressed schedule where provincial and western Canadian competitions are only four weeks apart.

Facing higher expectations at the provincials in Winnipeg Feb. 2-4, Van Driel hit 90 kg (198 lbs) in the squat, 60 kg (132 lbs) in bench press, 105 kg (232 lbs) in deadlift, and 255 kg (562 lbs) in total lift.

"At this meet, I placed first in my weight and age class again," Van Driel said. "I also passed the qualifying total for nationals."

In Moose Jaw, Van Driel will compete in the 63 kg class, the same class she will enter at the national championships this fall. She hopes to maintain her strong results.

"I would love to place first at West-erns, but I'm competing against some pretty strong girls there," Van Driel said. "So we'll see how it goes."

While powerlifting is an individual

activity, Van Driel said it's taken the help of many to get her this far. She thanks her family for putting up with what she said is a crazy lifestyle. Her coach, Jared McIntyre, and fellow athletes encourage her.

"I am so proud of myself for the results of my last competition, but I couldn't have done it without all the support I got and the number of people who believed in me," Van Driel said. "My coach didn't tell me what weight I would pull for deadlifts. All I was told was, 'Don't look at the weight... you've got this. Just pull hard and don't stop.'"

Like anyone, Van Driel has her moments of doubt and struggle. Some days, she doesn't want to train. But train she does, and in that is a lesson for everyone.

"It's all about discipline," she explained. "You are not going to get anywhere without discipline. People give up when things get hard; you can't do that. You're not going to give up if you want something badly."

"I had to want those first places more than anything. You must think of the consequences of eating out or skipping a workout and remind yourself what your goal is. If you want something bad enough, you'll do anything to achieve it."

Van Driel enjoys the sport on its own, but she has goals besides personal records.

"There are not many girls in this sport, let alone girls my age, so I hope to inspire others to start lifting as well."

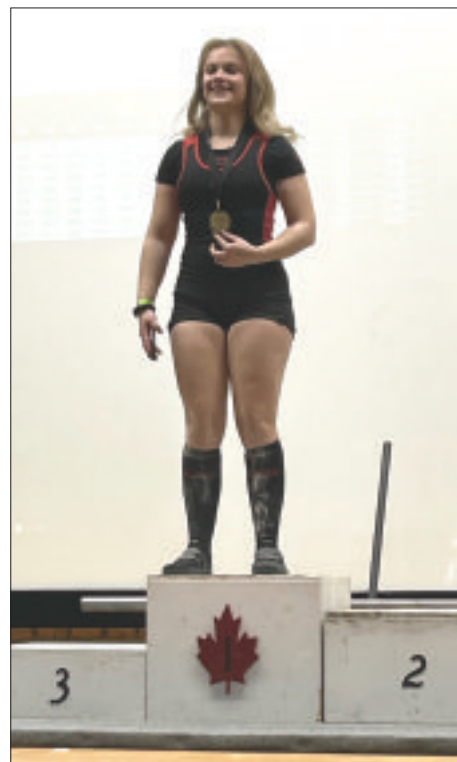


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Laine Van Driel broke four provincial records at her first competition last October and bettered those marks at the provincials earlier this month.

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