

walking DEADLIFT

Appearances are deceiving for powerlifter whose intense focus extends to other areas

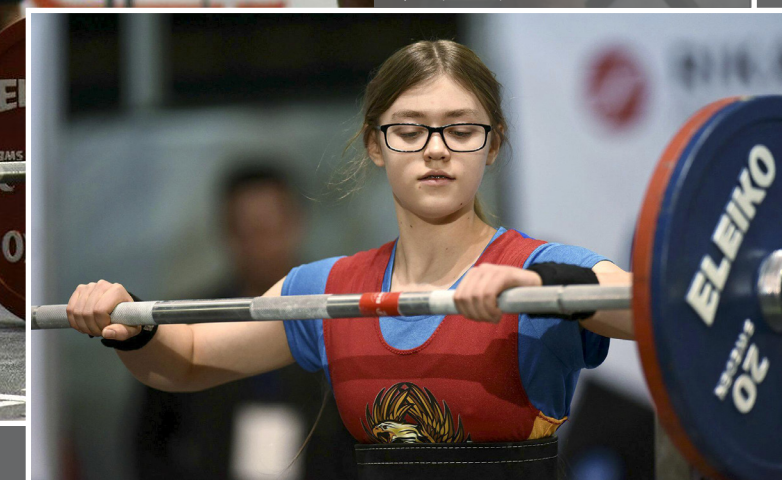
heavy lifting

Benching 143.3 pounds in the opening lift, sophomore Emily Gardner finishes with a 160-pound bench press (right). In the squat competition, Gardner won the gold medal for Team USA with a lift of 281.1 pounds. Lena Sjoel of Norway finished second, and Valeriia Vlosova from Russia finished third in the competition (below).



girl power

At the Classic Powerlifting 2015 World Championship in Salo, Finland, on June 8, sophomore Emily Gardner deadlifts 270.1 pounds (left). Gardner opened the competition with a 253.53-pound squat (below).



Sparkling blue eyes hidden partially behind the frames of glasses and dark blond hair falling down her back were the first two things one noticed when they saw her walking in the hallways. But unknown to most of the school's population was the fact that sophomore Emily Gardner held multiple official and unofficial records in squatting and was able to lift 270 pounds, over twice her weight and four-and-a-half times over what the average woman in the U.S. is able to lift without training.

"Powerlifting is what everyone thinks when you say, 'Oh, I powerlift,' and they immediately think of bodybuilding, which is very different than powerlifting," Gardner said. "Powerlifting is all about personal strength, and bodybuilding is about physique and stuff like that. So people don't really think that girls would be into powerlifting, and they'd think that I'd be all beefy, but you go into [the gym] and there's this woman who benches 300 pounds, but she looks just like a regular mom."

Several deciding factors allowed Gardner to achieve the status of Deadlift World Champion, including her serious, reserved personality and the time she devoted to the sport over the past three years.

"I've been told that I'm kind of obsessive, so I tend to focus on one thing. But powerlifting, unlike some of the sports here [at Westlake], it doesn't have to be your whole world. Since you're working with max numbers, the little things matter," Gardner said. "If you have one foot slightly forward or you aren't sitting neutrally, it can affect your lifting

ability. I just think it shows more about dedication."

During the time when she wasn't at the gym, Gardner was also a part of the all-girls robotics team, which exposed her to two very different and prominent aspects of Westlake and the rest of the community.

"[Lifting] definitely changed my perception on the kind of sporty people and the jocks, so it's opened me to different people because you have the athletic people in lifting and all the geeky people in robotics. It's kind of cool to see all of them," Gardner said. "There are a lot of people at the gym who are from all different walks of life, like lawyers and doctors, and so it's really neat to be open to everyone."

While Gardner enjoyed participating in the sport for herself as a hobby, her coach ultimately gave her the ability to work for the title of champion and helped make her into who she was as a person.

"What I like is that whenever I, personally, do well, I'm really proud of myself, but then my coach would come over and give me a hug, and he's all excited and happy," Gardner said. "Seeing him that happy kind of rubs off on me."

Lifting for Gardner created an environment where she was able to focus only on herself and her own mental strength, a place where she could truly succeed.

"It's nice because you're only fighting against yourself. You go in and just do what you can and accept it. It doesn't matter how other people do. For you, you know you had a good day or you know that you did the best you could, and that's enough," Gardner said. "That's all that really matters."

RECORDS, STATE & HEARTBREAK

Varsity snaps a 57-game winning streak on its way to championship game

57-0.

Allen High School Eagles' record on Dec. 10. The team's last loss came three seasons ago on Sept. 28, 2012.

57-1. Allen's record on Dec. 11 after falling to Westlake in the 6A Division 1 state semifinal game.

This showdown with Allen came after the Chaps defeated Atascocita High School on Dec. 5. With that win, Westlake not only advanced to the State Semifinals, where they would face the three-time defending state champions, but wide receiver senior Reed Klubnick propelled himself into the record books.

During the game, Klubnick broke the all-time record for receiving yards in Westlake history.

"It was always in my head throughout the season," Klubnick said. "Sam and I were both aware of it and did everything that we could to break the record."

Klubnick received five offers from D1 schools but

ultimately signed a National Letter of Intent on Feb. 3 to play football for Yale University.

"I have to finish recovering from my [torn meniscus] injury first," Klubnick said, "but then I will be able to work out my strength and conditioning to be the best I can be next year."

Klubnick was not the only player to break records this year. Quarterback junior Sam Ehlinger shattered the Westlake all-time record for passing yards.

"The satisfaction from the hard work of my teammates and I is the best feeling I could ask for," Ehlinger said.

Ehlinger was also awarded with placement on the MaxPreps Junior All-American as well as the All-American teams. Winning this recognition and committing to the University of Texas placed high expectations on Ehlinger for his senior year.

Story continued on page 64



making a statement

1 After catching a pass against North Shore, tight end senior Kylen Granson sprints toward the end zone to give Westlake the lead and score the only offensive touchdown of the game for Westlake. "Playing in the playoff and fulfilling my role in my team to make sure we were successful is what I have worked for since I was in first grade," Granson said. "All that hard work paid off with the sweet taste of victory and accomplishing goals I set years ago. It was a unique experience. Getting to go out there with my brothers and play some of the best teams in the state was unlike anything else I've ever been a part of." 2 Quarterback junior Sam Ehlinger looks for an open receiver while running back senior Noah Hodes blocks for him. "It was a dream come true, and it was amazing that all of our hard work paid off," Ehlinger said. "Hopefully we can get back there next year." 3 Before the State Championship game against North Shore High School, right tackle senior Kody Allen leads the team prayer. "I was telling everyone to 'play for each other, and that if God is on our side, then we will win,'" Allen said. 4 Jumping over an Allen High School defensive back, receiver senior Chase Cokley wrestles a pass away from his opponent in the end zone, helping lead to a 23-17 victory. Cokley finished the season with a team-high 1,284 receiving yards in 67 receptions.



brayden clark

a positive start

To cap off the first drive, senior Ryan Rees kicks a field goal to go up 3-0 against Allen. "I thought of myself as a defensive player," Rees said, "but the team needed me to be a kicker as well, so I said I'd do it."

reeling it in

In the State Championship game against North Shore, wide receiver junior Andrew Boykin catches a pass before being pushed out of bounds. "It was an amazing experience," Boykin said. "As a junior, I know what it takes to make it to the championship. I can use that to help us get back there next year."



racic fernandez



1. brayden clark 2-3. racic fernandez 4. brayden clark



"We were all confident that we could pull out the win, but I would not say we were overconfident. We definitely respected North Shore. Having the whole community behind us was really awesome though."

Ty Henderson, 12

racic fernandez



"It was so fun being able to go to NRG with the whole team. We were so excited to be there, and we had a really cool performance planned for the game. Being at state was a dream come true."

Madison Olfers, 11

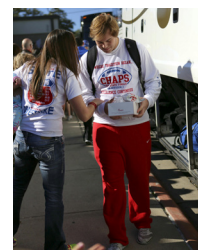
racic fernandez



"The atmosphere before the game was electric. Everybody was so excited. I've never seen the student body unite like that. There were no cliques — just a bunch of rowdy kids cheering on their golden boys."

Jake Guarino, 12

racic fernandez



"We were all excited, but we were trying to stay humble. We knew we were expected to win but understood that North Shore was a great team and this would be by no means easy."

Brycen Foreman, 12

brayden clark



"The atmosphere was amazing. Everybody was pumped up and could not wait for the game to start. Having the opportunity to be a part of the Pushup Squad is something that I will never forget."

Grayson Sullivan, 12

racic fernandez

small words
BIG
ATMOSPHERE

set the beat

1 At the state championship football game, sophomore Matteo Brunel laughs in the stands while playing his drums. "The North Shore game was incredibly fun and a time for us all to learn that you learn more from losing than from winning," Brunel said. 2 On Sept. 18 at the football game against Austin High, senior Alex Foye plays percussion. "Band is a special mix of passion for music and for friends," Foye said. "It's one of the most memorable experiences of my high school career." 3 During the Jazz Band concert, junior Ben Roberts plays his trombone. "Our first jazz band concert was a blast," Roberts said. "Our new director, Daniel Villanueva, put a lot of faith into the group this year, and we got to branch out with a lot of different styles of music." 4 Spinning a prop, freshman Samantha Williams performs during halftime of the Hays game on Oct. 26.



1-4. brayden clark

call me on my **MELLOPHONE**

Junior musician makes well-known drum corps by Olivia Hamilton

The sounds of the crowded airport surrounded junior Evelyn Webber as she made her way onto her flight. This was her first step into the next six years as a member of Phantom Regiment, one of the most famous drum corps in the world. Over Thanksgiving break, Webber auditioned for the marching band as a mellophone player.

"Ever since middle school, my family and I had been driving to Round Rock to see the band perform," Webber said. "And then for the past two summers, I've flown out to Rockford, Illinois, and done a camp with the Regiment to see the inner workings of their rehearsals."

Every drum corps had its own unique quality, and to her, Phantom Regiment held something special.

"In comparison to the other corps, Regiment really has a stronger sense of family, and they're filled with traditions," Webber said.

The journey brought on a whole new world and faces for Webber. "I had no idea what to expect, and I knew I was really young. A lot of people there were in college or had been doing drum corps for a long time," Webber said. "I felt out of place, but everyone was really welcoming, and I eventually felt like I belonged there."

The camp, held at a local middle school, gave the potential members an idea of what their summers would be like.

"The instructors threw us right into learning their style," Webber said. "They were looking for how quickly we improved within the two hours they gave us. We were constantly being given new instructions."

But despite the intense environment, Webber managed to persevere and was offered a contract with the Regiment by the end of the weekend.

"At first I didn't believe it. I wasn't even expecting a callback, I was really just using this as experience to audition again next year," Webber said. "Eventually everything sort of clicked into place, and I started crying and laughing because I was so happy."

Since accepting their offer, Webber had participated in two more camps, preparing for Phantom Regiment's tour across the country.

"I know that I won't want to leave now that I've joined. It's been a lot of hard work so far," Webber said, "but I know it's going to be worth it because this is what I've been passionate about for years now and I'm going to make so many life-long friendships in this band."



brayden clark

PERCRUSHIN' IT

Freshmen Sam Martin and Jonah Rasor play their xylophones Oct. 23. "A lot of people say that band is a family, but to me, percussion is like a smaller, closer family inside of band," Rasor said. "It's full of cool people and directors, and everyone is a friend just looking out for each other."

it's my **THING**



1. brayden clark 2. racic fernandez 3-4. brayden clark

band together

1 During halftime of the Hays game, senior Laura Arias entertains the audience with EVE. "The Elite Visual Ensemble has helped me to meet a group of friends who I will definitely be close to for a really long time," Arias said. 2 Sophomore J.D. Carlton, junior Rohan Pillay, senior Michelle Hunter and junior Matthew Bundschuh play their saxophones at the Jan. 21 Jazz Band concert. "I think [the director] gave the concert an energy, which was fun for the band and for the audience," Bundschuh said. 3 At the Oct. 9 half-time show, freshman Elizabeth Jackson throws her flag in the air. "Through EVE, I met one of my best friends," Jackson said. "From spinning flags to wearing a crazy thing on my head and even trying to do eyeliner on a bouncing bus, we've only grown closer." 4 On Nov. 21, junior Malyn Selinidis plays her piccolo during the playoff game in College Station.

"There isn't anything quite like the feeling of the first note of a performance," Selinidis said. "It's always a strange mix of nerves, pride and trust in my fellow band members that makes music worthwhile."



jim mcfarland

"Before my matches, I like to stay really focused during the warmup so that I am 100 percent ready to play."

Jett Wright, 9



charlie boyd

"We went to Randall's once. We have to get up super early for tournaments, like at 5 a.m., so we got snacks."

Raine Lipscher, 11



brayden clark

"The time we spent on the bus before games was the time where we really all got together and socialized."

Luca Menasveta, 11



charlie boyd

"I don't have any rituals, I just go play the best game of tennis I can."

Gabriel Thornhill, 9



brayden clark

"We always ate brown sugar Pop-Tarts, and it's just become a thing now."

Daniel Gross, 11



charlie boyd

"I give myself a pep talk and tell myself what I need to focus on more to win the game."

Micah Moffitt, 9



brayden clark

"I practice my swings before games just to make sure I don't do them wrong on the first few points."

Noah Temple, 11

GET GAME READY

COURT JESTERS

JV players find joy in playing together throughout stressful competitions

The shrill shriek of laughter echoed across the courts, and every JV tennis player knew that juniors Raine Lipscher and Lucy Hamill were at it again. No matter the competition or practice they were at, the pair always seemed to



ali mashburn

Lucy Hamill, 11

bring a little bit of joy to the team as well as to the more serious aspects of tennis.

"We kind of messed around at tournaments. Lucy and I would order Chinese food and throw things at each other," Lipscher said. "All the other teams were super serious, but we just wanted to have fun." The two closest friends on the team didn't leave their jokes off the practice court, however, and went as far as accidentally throwing a game in doubles when Hamill wouldn't stop making Lipscher laugh.

"We had this thing in doubles where whenever one of us messed up, one of us would say, 'We didn't warm up so we

messed up,'" Lipscher said. "I couldn't take anything seriously with Lucy. We act like dorks when we're around each other so it's kind of hard to make us play tennis together and tell us to be serious about it. So we stopped playing doubles together, but regardless, it was super fun."

But even in the times of laughter and fun, the girls managed to make the best out of their season when they weren't making mischief out on the courts.

"The best memory I have of this season is when I was playing doubles with my other doubles partner, Olivia [Fouch], and we couldn't stop making each other laugh," Hamill said. "We were in the middle of a match, but when we needed to be serious and focus on the game, we did, and we ended up winning 8-4."

After a long season of tournaments, early morning practices and bonding, the girls were able to savor the times together.

"I think the best part of JV tennis is that you get to experiment and joke around sometimes," Hamill said. "Varsity always has to be serious, and while we still have to take the competition seriously, there is a little bit more time for fun."

LOVE ALL

"One thing I like about tennis is how we get close as a team throughout the year and how that just makes practicing and tournaments so enjoyable."

Emma Tyson, 11



brayden clark

it's my THING



1



2



3



4



5

you just got served

1 At the baseline, freshman Avery Johnson sidesteps to return the ball back across the net. The match was played on Oct. 19 against Georgetown.

2 With his sight set on hitting the volley of balls over the net, junior Ben Thompson delivers a forehand on Sept. 23 at the match against Austin High. "I like playing tennis at Westlake because I have friends in the class with me,"

Thompson said. 3 With a toss of the ball into the air, junior Charlie Boyd serves at the game against Austin High on Sept. 23. "I've always wanted to be better than my brother," Boyd said, "so being able to beat him is my motivation."

4 Focused on the ball, junior Karan Lingineni prepares to return a forehand on Sept. 23 at the Westlake courts. "When I make a good point in a game, it gives me the confidence and energy that I need to finish the rest of the game for my team," Lingineni said. 5 Right as the ball strikes her racket, senior Emily Call jumps high to serve the ball to the other side during the game against Austin High on Sept. 23. "I'd say my favorite part about playing tennis is spending time with friends and being able to beat them in the game," Call said.

1. jim mcfarland 2-5. brayden clark

HOPE speaks in HAITI

After adopting a child, family immerses themselves in the underprivileged Caribbean community

a new addition

1 At the orphanage in Haiti, Comerson takes a nap on a pile of blankets. 2 On the prom night of Addie Allen's sister Avery, Comerson smiles for the camera while wearing an Abraham Lincoln costume. 3 Comerson, Kade, Addie and Avery Allen play with various toys during the family's trip to Haiti, where they met Comerson for the first time. 4 The Allens pose for their first family photo after bringing Comerson to Austin.



We're going to adopt a boy from Haiti" were words junior Addie Allen had never imagined her parents would say, but those were the exact words that would change her life forever. Allen and her brother and sister found out they would be welcoming a 2-year-old brother named Comerson into their family. But about a year later, Allen felt like her life had never been any different.

Allen's parents informed her and her siblings about how the adoption agency had found Comerson when he was 3 months old in a dumpster. He was HIV positive, had tuberculosis and other issues that he probably would not have been able to live through had he stayed in Haiti.

"I was shocked to hear that something that terrible still existed in the world," Allen said, "and I was happy to be doing something that could help."

At first little Comerson was alarmed by his new family and home, and because it was like nothing he had ever experienced before, he was shy and reserved. He was unable to talk to Allen or her siblings due to the language barrier and his being unfamiliar with his new setting. But he quickly adjusted and began to talk to them despite the language difference, and after a year he could fully understand and speak English. Other dramatic transformations included his recovery from most of his physical disabilities. When he first came to the Allen family, Comerson had very little hair and a huge stomach — because of the malnutrition he suffered from for most of his life — but a year later, he had a full head of hair and was back to a healthy weight.

"Comerson has become very smart, outgoing, energetic and a huge attention-seeker," Allen said. "I can't believe we've already had him for a year."

When the family initially traveled to meet Comerson, it was their first trip to Haiti, and Allen said it changed their lives forever. Her dad, Coburn Allen, who was a pediatrician for 14 years with additional training in pediatric infectious diseases and pediatric emergency medicine, realized how little medical care there was and how much help was needed in Haiti. He had wanted to start medical clinics in other parts of the world for a long time and felt that he was being called to do something to provide his experience to help people who needed it.

"I was super stoked about my dad starting the clinic because I knew he had been wanting to get involved abroad for quite some

time," Allen said, "and I was so happy for him to get the chance to do that."

The Allens then got involved with an organization called My Life Speaks, which provided an education for those in Haiti with special needs. Voodoo beliefs in Haiti influenced the people into considering those with special needs to be cursed and were often sacrificed in voodoo temples to rid the cultures of their "evil" presence. The organization helped to get rid of those beliefs and inform Haitians that people with special needs are just like everyone else.

"The special ed problem in Haiti breaks my heart," Allen said. "It also surprises me that it doesn't get much coverage in the media. It's weird to me how something so terrible and common goes so unnoticed to the rest of the world."

Not long after deciding to adopt her little brother, Allen's dad opened his own clinic in Haiti. He researched what he wanted to do and where he could do it so that it would be as beneficial as possible and ended up finding a place right next to the central My Life Speaks location. The clinic would be a site for doctors to teach Haitians how to properly medicate patients, and after providing the required equipment, they could become self-sufficient without reliance on America. The goal was to have Haiti grow on its own.

"After the clinic opened, people no longer ignored their medical problems," Allen said. "People now have hope that when they get sick, they can now get better."

During the opening of the clinic and their increased involvement with My Life Speaks, Allen and her family formed new relationships. They started welcoming mission trips and internships to help improve their clinic and spread the word of My Life Speaks by working for the nurses and helping teach the kids. The volunteers came from all over the state: groups sent by their church in Austin and their old church in Houston, friends from school and even students from her dad's UT classes.

With the clinic creating a solid, beneficial presence, Allen visited Haiti at least two times a year. Even though she was not old enough to intern, she loved to go and hang out with her new Haitian friends, as well as to love on the children there who didn't get that very often. Allen also fell in love with the culture and learned to speak Haitian so she could communicate with everyone and even took French at Westlake, which instilled in her a newfound appreciation for learning new languages. After being immersed into this unfamiliar culture, Allen had a new outlook on life.

"The whole experience has been very eye-opening," Allen said. "You don't realize how fortunate you are until you see people that literally have nothing. It changes your perspective on things."