BFS FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Jennifer Walter

How this exceptional athlete from a small Midwestern town became an exceptional role model

BY KIM GOSS

here's a checklist for determining which athletes are most deserving of the BFS Female High School Athlete of the Year. We're looking for an exceptional multi-sport athlete, a great student and a person of exceptional character. Many times, our candidates have traits that are extra exceptional: 2004 winner Sarah Cardinal could clean and jerk 220 pounds, and 2005 winner Valerie Davis had a full plate of charitable activities. What sets our 2006 winner, Jennifer Walter, apart is the wide spectrum of her achievements.

Jennifer is an exceptional athlete who last year was selected all state in track and volleyball, and all conference in basketball, where she was chosen team captain. She's strong and fast, with a 145-pound power clean at 126 pounds bodyweight, and a 4.9 forty. She's smart, with a 3.97 GPA; and she's active in school functions, including duties as treasurer for her student council. To top things off, Jennifer donates her spare

time in working with children at her church. All these things put together make her a role model for all student-athletes and the young woman that BFS judged worthy of BFS's highest praise.

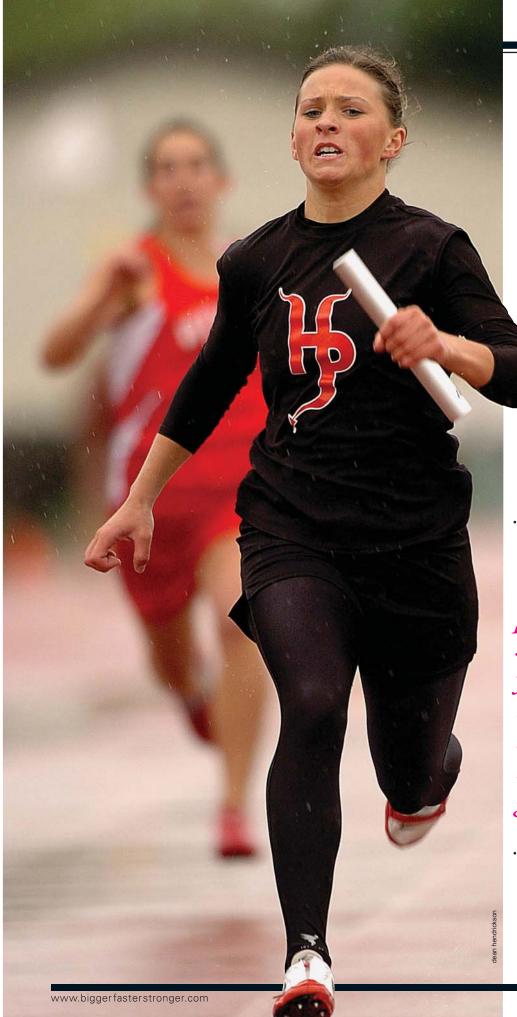
Jennifer is a student at Huntley Project High School, a school in Worden, Montana, that serves 278 students in grades 9-12. Many of the Huntley Project teachers have been with the school for a long time, and their school has close ties to nearby lower-level schools that feed the high school. Overall, there's a sense of family that makes Huntley Project special. One teacher who exemplifies this idea is Iona Stookey, the women's volleyball coach for 17 years and the assistant women's basketball coach for 11 years. Coach Stookey has been working with Jennifer continually since the fifth grade.

"I would say that in all my years here, Jennifer Walter is the best athlete that has come through this school, hands down," says Stookey. "Even as a fifth grader, Jennifer was already very athletic



and a great leader among her peers."

Jennifer was on the varsity volleyball team as a freshman, and that year they won state, going 36-0; the next year they won state again with a 35-0 record. Their winning streak lasted 99 games, and Coach Stookey says that Jennifer played a significant part in all the matches up to that point. "I use Jennifer as a setter, and she is so quick to the ball and such a smart player that she makes the other girls look good too." Stookey says that in addition to Jennifer's physical skills, she "plays to win and brings fire and leader-ship to the team. We had a situation when we were down 20-11 and Jen took



control and helped us win 25-22."

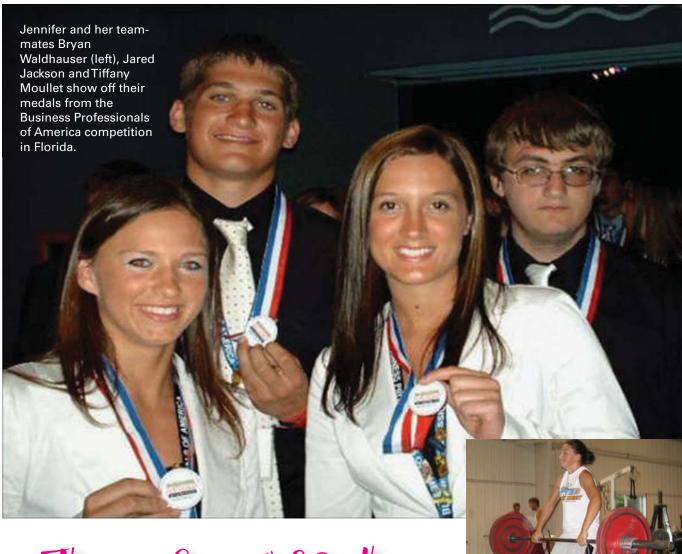
"We have had the BFS program at our school for about 10 years, although it was never full-fledged in our weightroom," says Mark Wandle, a history teacher who runs the weight training program and also coaches wrestling, track and football. "I came here seven years ago, and we had a group of young men and several young women who have utilized the weight program and BFS standards to accomplish great things."

Says Jennifer, "In my sophomore year in track season I knew I needed to get stronger, so I started taking the weight training program more seriously. Not only did I get stronger - I could definitely tell a difference this year in the state track meet - but I also found the workouts made me much quicker for my other sports as well." Wandle, who regularly tests all his athletes against BFS

"The advice I would give other parents is to make sure you know your kids. Talk to them, and get involved in what they are doing – go watch!"

-ELIZABETH WALTER

standards, says that Jennifer's best results include the following: power clean, 145; squat, 225; bench, 130; Dot Drill, 52.1; forty, 4.9; twenty, 2.71; and vertical jump, 24 inches.

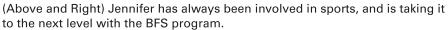


Jennifer Walter











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Although Jennifer is now a firm believer in weight training, she admits that when she started she worried she was going to get bulky. Not any longer. "I now know that this type of weight training program won't make me huge," says Jennifer. "I'm stronger and toned, but I don't think my appearance has changed much." She also says other girls have gotten bitten by the weightlifting bug. "In

Jennifer's mother, Elizabeth, says that she and her husband, Paul, always encouraged their children to do their best and to work hard. "The advice I would give other parents is to make sure you

hate the 400!"

44.44; 400-meter dash, 58.02; 100 hur-

dles, 15.1. She says her best event is the

favorite, she says without hesitation, "I

300-meter hurdles. As for her least

know your kids. Talk to them, and get involved in what they are doing - go watch!" Jennifer agrees and says this attitude applies not just to sports, but also carries over to schoolwork. "My parents pushed me to do my best, and to me, nothing less than straight

A's are good enough for them. I want my parents to be proud of me."

After high school, Jennifer plans to go to college and major in business or some aspect of the medical field, perhaps this year going to Florida to compete in a

national event sponsored by the Business Professionals of America. Her team placed fifth in the financial analysis competition.

spare time is spent with her family, volunteering at the Zoe Bible Church, where she works with



Jennifer with sister Bethany

"Follow your dreams and work hard at whatever you want to do – never stop working hard!"

-JENNIFER WALTER

my freshman year I'd see maybe two or three girls in the weightroom, but now there can be as many as 20 at a time!"

Jennifer works with children at a local church

Wandle has known Jennifer since junior high school, where he started her with light weights to perfect her lifting technique, not worrying about how much

Jennifer Walter's Family Support Group (left to right): Sister Kristin, parents Elizabeth and Paul, Jennifer with neice Jade, sister Bethany, niece Jaylyn, weight was on the bar. With sister-in-law Marlo, brother: Randy, and brother-in-

Jennifer's 10 individual state titles in running events, Wandle believes that track would be the best sport for her to focus on in college. Jennifer's best times include the following: 100-meter dash, 12.27; 200-meter dash, 25.5; 300-meter hurdles,

nursing. One of her academic highlights is

Jennifer's

preschool children - and just like most teens, some serious shopping. Most of the books she reads and music she listens to have a Christian

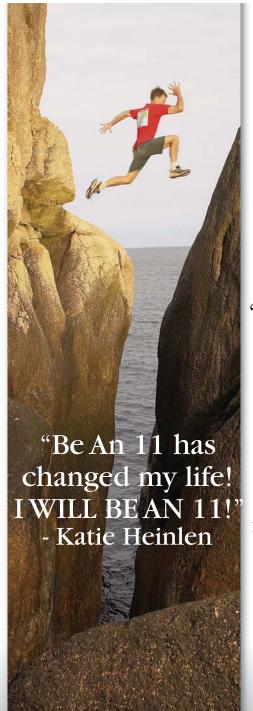
law Chris (not

pictured).

focus – and she doesn't know a single song of the Pussycat Dolls. Jennifer and her family say they occasionally watch television together as a family; but when pressed, neither Jennifer nor her mother can remember the last time they watched TV or what show they saw.

Although many young people idolize people in the entertainment industry, Jennifer says her role models have always been her brother and her sisters. "I always wanted to be just like them." And now, as a role model herself, she offers this advice to young girls: "Follow your dreams and work hard at whatever you want to do - never stop working hard!"

Jennifer could afford to be cocky about her accomplishments, but Coach Stookey says that's just not what she is about. "Jennifer isn't arrogant about all her success - she walks around with a smile on her face and will bend over backwards for anyone." With that type of endorsement, Jennifer Walter has earned our congratulations as 2006 BFS Female High School Athlete of the Year.





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