

Local lifter places seventh in nation



SUBMITTED

Vanessa Koppel of Fernandina Beach placed seventh in the nation at a recent weightlifting tournament.

Vanessa Koppel of Fernandina Beach competed in her first national weightlifting competition, the American Open Weightlifting Championships in Kissimmee earlier this month, as a member of the Women's Team Florida Weightlifting. She placed seventh in the country in her weight class (48 kg) by lifting a 35 kg snatch and a 53 kg clean-and-jerk.

Koppel, a freshman at Episcopal High School in Jacksonville, was the only athlete from the First Coast area of any age, sex or weight class to compete in this year's American Open and she is the only female from Jacksonville to ever qualify for the American Open, which has nearly 200 qualifiers per year.

"Vanessa did an outstanding job," said Jesse Reynolds, Koppel's coach. "She is only 15 and has already competed in the American Open. There are lifters who train their entire lives and never make it to that meet. I am incredibly proud of her and I consider it a blessing to coach her."

The Women's Team Florida Weightlifting took fourth place in the country and the Men's Team Florida Weightlifting placed first.

Koppel, who was a student of Pak's Karate of Fernandina Beach for 10 years, became a second-degree black belt in taekwondo at age 10. She collected 32 medals and 14 trophies while competing, taking the silver medal in the Junior Olympics in 2000 and was a bronze medalist in the U.S. Open in 2002.

She also plays piano and is an honor student at Episcopal High School.

For information, visit www.usaweighting.org.